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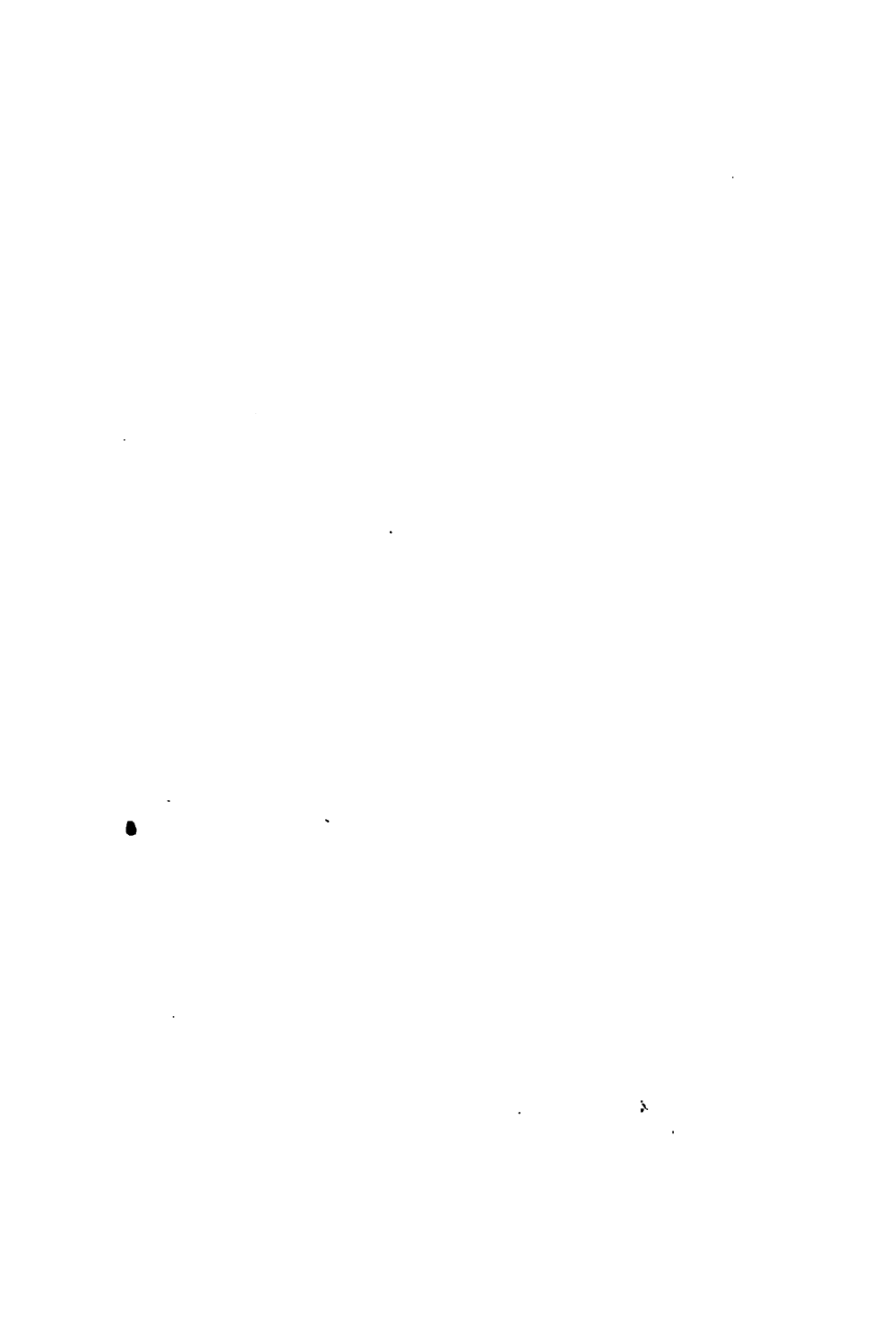
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LETTERS
TO A
BRIDE

MRS ARMSTRONG
AUTHOR OF
GOOD FORM





LETTERS TO A BRIDE

INCLUDING

LETTERS TO A DÉBUTANTE

Letters to a Bride

INCLUDING

LETTERS TO A DÉBUTANTE

BY

LUCIE HEATON ARMSTRONG

Author of

'Modern Etiquette in Public and Private,' 'Good Form,'

'The Etiquette of Parties,' 'Etiquette for Girls'

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P R E F A C E

DURING the years that I have conducted the "Good Form" column in the *Lady's Pictorial*, I have noticed how many of my correspondents have been girls—young girls in doubt as to how to behave at various social functions, yet afraid to ask their friends for advice for fear of being laughed at. Most of these girls have been motherless, and have preferred writing to a stranger to consulting their own friends. It occurred to me that a manual on etiquette would be a useful thing for the

class I have described, and I resolved to put it into the form of letters from an old yet kindly woman of the world, glad to pour out her experience for the benefit of the younger generation. I made my heroine a motherless girl, who felt like a waif and stray in the midst of a London crowd, thinking that many girl readers would feel sympathy with anyone in this situation. The first twelve letters ran through a number of country papers in serial form with such success that I had many letters from readers asking me to continue my letters to the young girl after she became a bride. I then wrote a new series of letters (which appeared in *Hearth and Home*), dealing with such slight social difficulties as might naturally occur to a young and timid girl, suddenly put into the responsible position of mistress of the

house. I have grown very fond of Letty now that I have been in communication with her for so long. I hope that my readers may care a little for her too.

LUCIE HEATON ARMSTRONG.

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LETTERS TO A BRIDE

INCLUDING

LETTERS TO A DEBUTANTE

to become shy and awkward, and if any of us seemed afraid of strangers she would take care to conquer this tendency by sending us on little messages to friends, taking it for granted we should know what to say. We never dared to say we should be shy, knowing she would tell us that it was nonsense for us to be thinking of ourselves at all. We used always to be in the room on her "At Home" days, and she used to let us hand round the cakes when we were ever so little, that we might get accustomed to being careful and learn to think of other people.

We had a good deal to do on those "At Home" days. I assure you we had no time to think about ourselves! We used to hand round the tea and cakes, and put down the cups when they were finished with, and often we were sent to fetch some book or photograph that a visitor wanted to see. We had to amuse any little children who happened to call, and if my father was not there we used to go downstairs with the visitor when she was leaving, and help her on with her wraps. We used to come down to lunch every day with the governess, and had to help change the plates and so on, supposing there were visitors and the

servants had left the room; and though I don't think we enjoyed the meal very much, or cared for the "grown-up" talk, still I have no doubt it accustomed us to society. Although we were such a large family, we were always encouraged to make friends, and my mother used to be delighted if we were asked on a visit; she said it was so good for us, and helped to rub the angles off.

My mother was strict about some things, but she was very kind as well. She never let a bad habit go unchecked, but she was careful not to tell us of things before company, and she would not allow our brothers to tease us. She would never allow a child to be called awkward; she would say, "If you call her awkward you will make her so." And the dancing-lessons we had, and the drilling and gymnastics! She said it was no use telling people to be graceful if you did not let them exercise their muscles.

I can never be sufficiently grateful to my mother, and I only wish you had had half my advantages. You lost my dear sister-in-law just at the very time you needed her most, and how my poor brother could have brought you up as he has done is a perfect mystery to me.

It makes me feel wretched when I think of your lonely girlhood, in that dreary old castle near the dreadful country village, where there was nobody to know. I would rather be dead at once if I had to be buried alive, because then it would at least be suitable! And now that your father has come back from abroad he has suddenly become aware of his responsibilities, and he has handed you over to Lady Highflyte, and asked her to introduce you into society. And you feel as frightened and out of place as the traditional fish out of water.

I wish that you could overcome your fear of your chaperon, and tell her of all your little difficulties. I can understand your being frightened of the daughters—more starched young women I never saw—but surely Lady Highflyte is too much a woman of the world not to set you at your ease if you confide in her? However, we cannot make confidantes of people we are afraid of, and the only other course I can suggest is that you should write to your old aunt whenever you are in any difficulty, and she will tell you what is right for you to do.

Young girls cannot be expected to know

everything, especially those who have been brought up under such disadvantages as you have. So write and ask me anything you want to know, and feel quite sure of my sympathy, and that I would not laugh at you for all the world.

I am so sorry that you feel so dreadfully shy in company, so that society is almost a pain. Shy people suffer themselves and make everybody round them unhappy; so try to overcome this failing by every means in your power. Shyness proceeds from ignorance or inexperience, and also from an exaggerated self-consciousness. Your shyness will vanish when you know exactly what you have to do, and when you are so interested in other people that you forget all about yourself. When once you have mastered the laws of etiquette you will never be in doubt what to do, and the hesitation and embarrassment you speak of will all pass away. Ease of manner is not attained by carelessness, but by knowledge—knowledge is power in society as elsewhere. Society is far less formal than it was in the days of my youth, but still it has its *unwritten* laws which it does not

do to disregard. People will make every excuse for a young girl, but there are certain things which would be noticed at once, such as her behaviour on a first introduction.

Precedence is an important point, and you must remember never to precede a married lady, unless she is your hostess, when it is right that she should yield her claim to you. Do not try to talk when you are shy, but remember that an intelligent listener is always appreciated. A great deal depends on your manners during your first season, and I should be sorry for you to get the name of being either too shy or too forward. Try not to be self-conscious. The rule for the stage is also the rule for society—"be always attentive to the business of the scene." Do not whisper to another girl in a small company so as to interrupt general conversation, and do not talk whilst music is being performed. Think of yourself as a unit of the gathering, and be interested in what affects the rest. The whole of good manners lies in the expressive French phrase, "to assist." The French do not ask you if you went to a party, but if you assisted at it;

they take it for granted that your presence was a help.

Do not under-rate yourself, my dear Letty, or you will become more shy than ever. Remember that a bright young face is always welcome, and behave so as to be an assistance to your hostess, instead of an inconvenience. Talk to the shy young girl, or the lonely old lady; sing or play if there is no one else to do so; start some amusing game—there are so many little things which a girl can do quite unobtrusively, if she will only forget herself and her shyness, and she will really be a welcome guest. As for blushing, my dear, I don't think you need trouble so much about that! It is a malady which you will not suffer from when you are as old as your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

II

VISITING AND VISITING-CARDS

WHEN I was young, my dear Letty, visiting was a very different matter from what it is now. We used to drive out in the afternoon and pay a round of calls, leaving cards on a variety of acquaintances, who were nearly always out. When we came home we generally found that the same people had been calling on us, so that we had little gratification from society besides the sight of one another's pasteboards. The fashion of "At Home" days has changed all this, and society is all the more agreeable in consequence. It is far more pleasant to drive out to pay calls when you feel sure of finding your hostess at home, with the cup which cheers but not inebriates ready to hand. At the same time, it is a little difficult to remember everybody's "day," and a visiting-book is the only way out of the

dilemma. Life has become a perfect fretwork of first Wednesdays and third Thursdays, and it requires a good deal of industry to cope with it at all. Perhaps you will say, Why not call at any other time? But when a hostess takes the trouble to give up a certain day for the purpose of receiving, it is inconsiderate not to take advantage of it.

My own visiting-book is always most carefully kept, and it is a great saving of trouble in the end. Write the names and addresses of your friends, together with their respective "days," on one side of the page, with the dates of their visits, and those of the return calls. Visiting is a serious business, and it is better to engage upon it in a systematic way.

Most of your visits will be paid in company with Lady Highflyte, as she is sure to take you round to introduce you to all her friends. I hope you will make a good impression at first starting, and I am very happy to give you any hints I can. Be specially careful about the way you enter a room; let your figure be erect, your carriage graceful, your face lit up by a pleasant smile. Your chaperon will introduce

you to the lady of the house on entering the room, and she will shake hands with you at once. Do not wait to be invited to sit down, standing about as if you were not sure of your welcome; seat yourself near your hostess, ready to enter into conversation with her, or with anyone to whom she may introduce you. You must not seem fussy or excitable. Take your part in the conversation, yet do not monopolise it. Family topics should be avoided on such occasions, and you should talk of the last new book, or the last new play, or any subject in which all can join. When introduced to other visitors, merely bow, and enter into conversation at once. Bow to them again when leaving, or, if you have talked very much to them, you can offer to shake hands.

I have often been very much amused at the queries in etiquette columns, such as "What should I do when a gentleman is introduced to me? Should I rise and shake hands, or sit still?" One would think that a girl's natural instinct would prompt her to sit still, yet I once saw the contrary course pursued at a country gathering, and very funny it was.

The hostess introduced a young man to a young country lady, and she sprang to her feet as if she had been shot, and said: "I am delighted to make your acquaintance, Mr So-and-so! I have often heard my brothers speak of you." The ladies present found the greatest difficulty in repressing a smile, and the young man was dreadfully embarrassed. Now, I don't suppose for a minute you would do anything so silly as this, but when you have lived a very secluded life you are more easily taken off your guard, so I am sure you will take all my advice in good part, and not mind if it appears too elementary.

Gloves are not removed at afternoon tea, except there are hot buttered cakes, when it is allowable to remove the right-hand glove. Don't take a plate unless you have a little table beside you to put it down on; it is so uncomfortable to have your hands full. Put down your teacup when you have finished your tea; it is awkward to sit with it in your hand. If any gentleman is present, he will put it down for you, otherwise rise and put it down yourself if you have no little table within reach.

Twenty minutes is enough for a visit, particu-

larly if it is a first call. The visitor who is the first to arrive should also be the first to leave. The hostess generally accompanies you to the drawing-room door; but if the room is full of people, she lets one of the gentlemen visitors open the door instead. When a gentleman opens the door for you, always bow and thank him, but do not shake hands except you have been previously acquainted. If the host is at home he accompanies you down to the hall and sees after you generally. I suppose I need not tell you that you must under no circumstances take your umbrella into a room.

You ask me what you are to do about calling on any acquaintances in town, and whether it would look pushing to do so, or if you had better wait for them to call. Now, my dear Letty, of course you must call! How are they to know you have come to town if you don't? In the country you wait for the residents to call, and the greatest lady in the place calls first, but in town it is the rule for the latest comer to call, else no one would know she was there.

A first call should be returned within a week—ten days at the very outside. Calls after an

entertainment should be made within a week, especially after a dinner. You must leave cards after every kind of entertainment, with the exception of a garden-party. Calls are not required in this case, as people often go very great distances to these entertainments, and it would not often be possible to do so again merely in order to leave cards. You need only leave cards after most entertainments, but after a dinner you must always ask if the hostess is at home. I would advise you to do the same after a dance. A dance is a good deal of trouble to a hostess, and it will be a pleasure to her to see your bright young face after it, and to hear how much you enjoyed your evening.

I see you are like every other young lady, my dear Letty, you want to have a visiting-card of your own. "How would I have it printed, and how large is it to be; and do I think the size of a gentleman's visiting-card is preferable to the usual lady's size?" My dear niece, how disagreeable you will think me when I answer all these queries with the monosyllable "Don't." You are not supposed to have a card at all, as long as you are under chaperonage.

It is only young ladies who go into a profession who are allowed to have cards of their own. Of course, if you were an artist or a novelist, it would be correct for you to have your own cards; a business call is a purely personal matter, and you would not send up your chaperon's name when you wanted to see a publisher. When you are calling with Lady Highflyte she will write your name in pencil on her visiting-card, under her own name. When you are at home with your father your name must be printed on his visiting-cards (underneath his name), and his card in this case must be the size of a lady's visiting-card instead of a gentleman's. This is always the course pursued by widowers' daughters until they are old enough to have visiting-cards of their own. When you wish to call on friends with whom your father is totally unacquainted, you should leave your father's card, with your own name printed on it, drawing a line through your father's name, as he is not in town at present.

Never omit the prefix to your name. I know that it is the custom with American girls, but a card looks very bad without the

"Miss." A lady's card must be always simple in style, the words being printed in small copperplate type, without any attempt at ornament. The name of the lady is printed in the centre, with her address in the left-hand corner. If she has a second address this is generally printed in the opposite corner. A temporary address should be written in pencil—ink looks hideous on a visiting-card. The "At Home" day may be printed either at the right-hand upper corner or in the place of the country address; if it is placed at the top it is sometimes in a diagonal line. The words "at home" should not be used; "first Monday" or "last Saturday" would be enough. The ordinary size of a lady's visiting-card is about three-and-a-half inches, but a good many ladies have adopted a smaller size of late, just a little bit larger than a gentleman's card. A card of this size is very convenient, as it will fit into a purse or a pocket-book, and many other things, in addition to the ordinary card-case, and the edges do not get so easily turned up. But perhaps the old-fashioned size looks better style.

Cards must be left on the hall table after paying a visit; they should never be sent up before-

hand except on a business call. When I was young, a lady never left her visiting-card if she had seen the lady of the house, but the fashion of "At Home" days has altered this, and a visitor generally leaves her card after a first call, so that one may know when to find her at home. She leaves two of her husband's cards on a married couple, one on a widow, and none on a single lady, except the latter were elderly. She leaves one of her own cards in each of the cases mentioned. If her husband calls with her, and sees the hostess, he leaves one of his cards for the absent master of the house; if the host happens to be at home also, no cards of the gentleman's need be left. Supposing the hostess were out, two of the husband's cards and one of the wife's would be sufficient, unless there were grown-up daughters, in which case the lady would leave a second card for them, or turn down the corner of her card to show that she included them in the call.

This question of turning down the corner of the card seems to exercise your mind a good deal, so I had better tell you at once that it has two distinct meanings, according to the

circumstances under which it is employed. The turning down of the corner implies that you have left it yourself, and not sent it by a servant, as no one but the owner would take this liberty with a card. Its second meaning is that it includes all the family on whom you are calling. Supposing a lady had seven daughters, you could not leave seven cards; you would leave one and turn down the corner to show you included them all. A gentleman never turns down the corner of his card, for fear there are any single ladies in the house, for you know a man cannot call upon a girl.

When you are leaving cards and the hostess is out, simply give them to the servant with the words, "For Mrs Dash." This is the correct formula, and nothing more must be added, just as when you are going to be announced in a drawing-room you must simply say to the servant, "Miss So-and-So," without a single additional word.

You were quite right to leave P.P.C. cards before you left the country, and you will have to do the same thing when you leave town at the end of the season. Do not trouble about

it at Christmas; everyone is supposed to be away then; also at Easter and Whitsuntide. But you will require to leave these cards at the end of the season, or if you are going to be away for a long time.

P.P.C. stands for *pour prendre congé* (to take leave), as I need scarcely inform you, and has quite superseded P.D.A. (*pour dire adieu*), which, I believe, was used long ago. Write P.P.C. at the lower corner of your visiting-cards, and commence to leave them within a week or ten days of your departure from town. These cards are left in person, or by a servant, but are not supposed to be sent by post. But I see no reason why they should not be sent by post: professional people do so already, and I really hope fashionable folk will soon follow their example. The distances in town are so enormous, and it seems a dreadful waste of time to drive all over London for the sake of such an impersonal leave-taking. Cards "to inquire" should never be sent by post, but there is reason in this, as the person who makes the inquiries is able to obtain news of the invalid, and it is gratifying to the latter to know that

a personal inquiry has been made. I am always in favour of anything that makes for kindness, but when it is a question of empty ceremony I am always in favour of reform.

My best love to you, my dear.—Your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

III

THE ETIQUETTE OF DRESS

DRESS is a very important matter to a young girl, and I can quite understand that you require a few hints on the subject. I do not want you to be one of those frivolous people who think of nothing but dress, but you are right to give a certain amount of consideration to the matter. The world judges greatly by exteriors, and a pleasant appearance is like a good letter of introduction.

Simplicity should be the principal attribute of a young girl's dress, and there is no occasion for her to dress as handsomely as though she were a married woman. The young Princesses have set a good example in this respect, and have always dressed with the greatest simplicity as long as they were unmarried. Neatness of attire is a beauty in itself, and there is something unmistakable about the well-groomed appearance

of the society woman. You will always notice that a really smart woman is very neat about the head, and never allows her fringe to degenerate into a fluffy mass of untidiness. Girls dress more than they used to, however, in my young days, and the difference between the attire of mother and maid is perhaps more in style than in material. Brocades are not now denied to young ladies for the evening, only that the patterns should be smaller and lighter than those which would be worn by an older woman. Still, an English girl never looks better than in a tailor-made gown or a muslin frock, and she will be wise to worship at the shrine of Sainte Mousseline and leave elaborate toilets to older folk.

Let me advise you, dear Letty, to adopt a simple style, and to have everything very good, but plain. No imitation ornaments, no cotton-backed satins, no untidy odds-and-ends, and do not dress your hair in the over-elaborate style which makes a young lady look like a barmaid. And whatever you do, Letty, do not be beguiled into making up your complexion, it looks very bad form in a girl. There

are certain things in which it almost pays to be a little extravagant; it is not wise to practise economy in the matter of gloves and boots, for example, and a silk lining gives a wonderful air of distinction to a simple dress.

Town and country dress are very different, and a distinction should always be made between the winter and the season. It is scarcely possible to be too smart during the season, but fashionable women do not dress so much in the winter months, when so many people are away. You do not dress for luncheon in the country; the morning dress is usually worn until you slip on a tea-gown for the little time between coming in from the drive and dressing for dinner. But a smart afternoon dress is generally assumed in town for lunch, because in this case the meal is generally the preamble to a round of calls and parties. Tailor-made gowns and tea-gowns form the alpha and omega of country-house dress; but town demands more variety of style, and you must wear just the right thing for different occasions.

It has been said that if a woman were invited to the Garden of Eden, the first question she

would ask would be what she would wear! It is all very well to make silly remarks like this, but, as a matter of fact, it is often a very difficult matter to select the right thing. People in town are so deceptive about their entertainments; they will invite you verbally to what turns out to be a very smart party, and tell you they are trying to brighten the winter up by informal evenings, and when you go you will find an elaborate party, with everyone in evening dress. Smart ladies very often do not like to make much fuss beforehand about their entertainments, for fear they should turn out a failure. But do not be deluded into wearing a demi-toilette when you ought to be in full evening dress.

I remember once receiving a most entertaining letter from a young country lady who was asked to a literary dinner. "Ought I to wear evening dress?" she asked, "or should I adopt a modest compromise, consisting of a high black silk and white gloves?" I expect this poor lady would be an irreclaimable dowdy, and would manage to look unfashionable whatever you put her in, but I was distinctly grateful

to her for having enriched my vocabulary with such an amusing expression for a *demi-toilette*.

Few people look well in the evening unless they are accustomed to going out a great deal. Evening fashions change very quickly, and the dress you had made in the country last winter would look simply primeval if you wore it this winter in town. Very daring things can be worn in the evening by people who have experience; for if you do not look striking, your *toilette* will not tell in a crowd. But if you wear a contrast let it be by premeditation; do not jumble up your colours without thought, or wear a variety of different jewels together. The usual fault of a person who goes out very little is the tendency to put on a number of unnecessary ornaments. Natural flowers are the special snare of the neophyte, who will go into some crowded party depending for all her effect on a spray of flowers which will look like decayed vegetables by the end of the evening.

The dinner-hour is what regulates dress in London. If you are asked out in the evening it is always correct to go in evening dress, because you are naturally supposed to have

dressed for dinner. You can wear a demi-toilette for a very small party, but it would be incorrect to do so for a ball. It is not usual to dress for dinner on Sunday, because you are supposed to be going out to evening church. If you are asked to dine at the House of Commons you will notice a great mixture of toilettes, and I think anyone might be excused for feeling a little in doubt on receipt of this particular invitation. As a matter of fact, it does not much matter what you wear, but the rule is that you would not appear in full dress unless you were going on anywhere else afterwards.

You should dress rather smartly for a luncheon party; and remember that you never take off your bonnet; you can give your wrap to the servant, as you go in, but do not remove your gloves until you are seated at the table. The same thing applies to a wedding; no wedding guest ever removes her hat. You asked me whether you must buy a bonnet for church, and regret that this form of headgear does not suit you. You can do just as you like in this matter. A little while since it would not have

been considered proper to wear a hat in church, but hats are now so dressy that they are worn on every possible occasions.

You asked me if I would tell you a little about mourning, not for your own benefit, I am happy to say, but for the sake of some friends who have consulted you. I have stupidly lost your letter, and have forgotten, unfortunately, exactly what it was you wanted to know, however, I will write you all the proper periods of mourning, and then you will always be able to have them to refer to. A widow's mourning lasts for two years—one year and nine months with crape, the rest of the time plain black. The widow's cap used to be worn for a year, but now it is very rarely adopted except by quite old ladies. Evening dresses are sometimes trimmed with dull jet instead of crape, and single-stone diamond earrings and a small diamond brooch may be worn in the deepest mourning.

A daughter wears mourning for a parent for the period of twelve months—six months black with crape, four months plain black, two months half-mourning. The same for a parent

who loses a daughter. A sister wears mourning for a brother or sister for six months—crape for three months, plain black for two months, half-mourning for a month. Mourning for an infant brother or sister is only worn for three months, and no crape is worn in this case. Mourning for a grandparent is worn for six or nine months. If the longer period is chosen, crape is worn for three months, plain black for the same period, and half-mourning for the remainder of the time. The rule for the shorter period is three months crape and three months plain black. The period of mourning for an uncle or aunt is from six weeks to three months; plain black all the time if the shorter period be chosen, otherwise black (without crape) for two months, half-mourning for a month. For an uncle or aunt by marriage, black (without crape) for six weeks. For a great uncle or aunt, plain black for from one month to two. For a first cousin, the longest period of mourning is six weeks, the shortest a month. Wives should mourn for their husband's relations as if they were their own.

These are the different periods of mourning, my dear Letty, as they were observed in my young days, but the modern tendency is in favour of shortening these periods, and some people have a prejudice against wearing crape. It is right that you should know what the orthodox rules are, then you can use your own discretion with regard to carrying them out.

Good-bye for the present, dearest Letty; you shall have a longer letter next time from—
Your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

IV

HOW TO WRITE A LETTER

I CAN'T bear to think of your being so unhappy at the Highflytes, but can quite understand how painful it must be to you to feel that you make mistakes in so many little things which a girl of your birth and position would naturally be expected to know. But one cannot know everything by instinct, dear Letty, and many allowances should be made for you, considering that you lost your mother so early, and have never had anyone to take her place. The great trouble at present seems to be letter-writing. The eldest girl, Helena, writes nearly all the letters of the family, but when she is out Lady Highflyte will often give you a whole batch of correspondence to answer; and you have not the least idea how to set to work. A letter to a lady of rank, a letter to a servant,

invitations to answer, some in the first person, and some in the third — each presents a new difficulty, and you don't know at all how to act. You often spend half the morning in trying to recollect whether you put the Honble. on an envelope or not, or what is the proper way to address the head of a firm. You say how you wish I could be with you, as you would not mind asking me, and you know I could tell you in a moment; and you have sent me quite a long list of questions about how to address various people. I think the best thing I can do is to give you a few general rules to go by, and if you keep my letter you may find it useful to refer to when in doubt.

The first rule I shall lay down for your guidance is this: Always reply in the same style in which the original letter is couched. A letter in the third person must be answered in the same style, a letter beginning "Dear Madam" must be answered with "Dear Sir." Always state your subject at the commencement of your note, giving the explanation afterwards. For example, supposing you are refusing an invitation, begin by saying: "Dear Mrs Dash,—

I am so sorry to find that I shall not be able to come to lunch to-morrow after all" (then go on with your explanation), "for when I came home yesterday I found my aunt had made another engagement for me. Is it not tiresome?" Now, you are not exactly bound, my dear Letty, to say what the other engagement is, but it is always more civil to do so, as it looks more genuine, so I should advise you to continue as follows: "My uncle So-and-So has come up from the country, and wants to see me, and unfortunately Tuesday is the only day that he is free.—Hoping you will let me come some other day instead, Believe me, Dear Mrs Dash, Always very sincerely yours, LETTY LAVENDER."

Now, this is a fair example of the friendly note, neither too gushing nor too abrupt. Girls are very apt to err in the latter respect, and I will own it is not always easy to hit the happy medium, so as to be neither too friendly nor too cool. A formal note of acceptance or apology is really a much easier thing to write, because there are certain set rules to be followed, which admit of scarcely any variation. You re-

ceive an invitation couched in the following style:—

“Mr and Mrs Blank” (the husband’s name is always mentioned in an invitation to dinner, you know, Letty)—well, “Mr and Mrs Blank request the pleasure of Lady Highflyte’s company at dinner on Monday, November 12th, at 8 o’clock.

R.S.V.P.”

“3 ECCLESTON SQUARE.”

As a rule, you get this invitation on a printed card, with nothing written except the names and dates. Supposing that Lady Highflyte asks you to reply to such an invitation for her, you will do it in the following words:—

“Lady Highflyte has much pleasure in accepting Mrs Blank’s kind invitation for Monday, the 12th.”

Or—

“Lady Highflyte regrets that a previous engagement will prevent her from having the pleasure of accepting Mrs Blank’s kind invitation for Monday, the 12th.”

A letter in the third person is always a little difficult to write, so it is better to use the first person if the letter requires to be a very long one. The third person is the correct form for ceremonious letters, and particularly if you are addressing an entire stranger. When you write a formal letter in the first person you should put "To J. Blank, Esq.," either at the top or bottom of the letter, but this must never be done when you are writing in the third person. If you are writing a business letter in the first person, begin "Sir," or "Dear Sir," and sign "Yours faithfully." When writing to a firm put "Messrs," and commence "Gentlemen." Letters to servants are usually written in the third person, but they may also be written in the first person, with the name of the recipient at the top.

If I were writing to a servant whom I was just about to engage, I should do it in the following fashion:—

"Jane Smith.

"I shall be much obliged if you will call at 12.30 to-morrow morning.

"P. DEVEREUX."

I don't pretend for a minute that I should preserve the same artificial style if I were writing to my dear old Mary, who was with me when I first married, and nursed my children when they were babies. I should write :—

“Dear Mary,—I shall be back to-morrow, and am bringing Miss Letty; will you tell Marjory to prepare the Blue Room?”

But this is a matter of fancy, and has nothing to do with etiquette.

Let me refer to your letter once more, my dear girl, that I may see what you specially wish me to tell you. Lady Highflyte asked you to write an informal little note to Mr Vereker in her name, to ask him if he could come in to lunch on Sunday, and she was very angry indeed with you because you began “My dear Mr Vereker.” Now, really, Letty, that was dreadful! It was about the most ignorant-looking thing you could do. Did nobody ever tell you it was incorrect to use the possessive pronoun in a letter to a man, except he were

a relative or your *fiancé*? A man does not write "My dear Miss Lavender" to you—he begins "Dear Miss Lavender," and signs himself "Very sincerely," or "Very truly yours." But I am sure you will remember never to make this mistake again.

I see Lady Highflyte also found fault with you because you wrote a letter to somebody who was staying on a visit, and forgot to add the name of the host to the address. I wonder you should have made such a mistake as that. Have you not my envelopes before you? Do I ever write a letter to you that I do not put "C/o Lady Highflyte" on the envelope? It is very wrong to omit this when people are visiting; it looks as if you thought they were living in the house. Referring to your letter again, I see that you say that you knew you ought to have put "Care of," but you did not do so because you were not sure whether you should have put the name of the master or the mistress of the house. You knew the house belonged to the master, but it did not seem correct to address the letters of a young lady to the care of a man. I can understand your

feeling in doubt, but will hasten to assure you that it is correct to put the name of the host in this case; if you ignore him, it looks as though the hostess were a widow. You would put the hostess's name at the top of your list for the laundry, by the way, but then that is different, because these bills are supposed to go to the lady of the house. You put your own name first, with "At Lady So-and-So's" underneath.

You ask me what I think of your handwriting, my dear Letty, and I must candidly reply that I don't like it all. It looks all wrong style, somehow. I have seen worse hands that produced a better effect. It is too small, it is too cramped, and the lines are irregular and inclined to run down hill. Pray get out of this habit of trying to see how much you can cram into a page. Don't put "I am, dear sir, yours faithfully," all in one line. There is plenty of room for everything, and it looks vulgar to economise space to this extent.

Begin a new paragraph for every fresh subject, starting at a little distance from the margin. If there is not enough matter for more than two

pages, never conclude on the second side, leaving the third and fourth pages blank. You can conclude either on the third or fourth page, as you prefer. Try to write legibly, and in every way consult the comfort of the reader. It is disrespectful to your correspondent to give him so much trouble to decipher your letter. Do not dodge about from one page to another unnecessarily, so that the letter must be turned over all sorts of ways before it can be read. As for your notepaper, my dear, there is a good deal of fashion in these things, and you who are in town ought to be better able to judge of such matters than I can. A girl's notepaper may be a little more ornamental than an older person's, and there is no harm in your using a pretty initial, or mauve paper and sealing wax, as I notice you sometimes do; still, if you feel at all in doubt about your taste, you will be wiser to stick to very plain stationery. No one can find fault with white notepaper of good quality, but most of the fancy notepaper brought out by the stationers is very vulgar. You had better get some correspondence cards for short notes, such as answering invitations. Never have

your Christian name on your envelopes; it is very bad style.

Never begin "Dear So-and-So," or conclude "Yours sincerely," on a postcard. Simply write the message, with your initials at the end. I would advise you to write in English, and not in that singular language known as "postcard French."

Letters of condolence are very difficult to write, and it is better not to draw them out to too great a length. A word of sympathy is sufficient, and if you write much you are likely to appear insincere or unfeeling. Do not refer to any other topic than the bereavement; the introduction of any other subject is apt to appear in bad taste. I generally keep a little notepaper with a narrow black edge, in case I have to write one of these letters. I should not wait to get it, however, if it was not in the house, for an expression of sympathy ought to be instantaneous. People do not use such heavy-looking mourning notepaper as formerly. I am sure that a letter from a widow used to be a downright shock when it came out of the post-bag; but *people seem* able to mourn now without frighten-

ing their friends into fits. Sometimes the black line is only on one side of the envelope, sometimes a triangular section of black at one corner of the notepaper answers the same purpose as a crape band on a sleeve. Very deep mourning paper has quite gone out of fashion, and even memorial cards (when sent) are less portentous than they were.

Now I have got to the end of my notepaper, and I have never told you a word about how to address persons of various ranks, which is the very thing you were so anxious to know. Never mind, Letty; look out for my next letter, and I hope with all my heart that you will not get into any fresh social difficulties before then.—
Ever, my dear, your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

V

HOW TO ADDRESS PEOPLE

I AM afraid you will think this a very dry letter, but I hope you will find it a useful one. It is most important that you should learn the exact way to address people, both by letter and colloquially, for mistakes on these points are only forgiven in Americans, who are not supposed to be acquainted with all our little ways. It is a good deal of trouble to master all the details of the correct mode of address, but it is a necessary part of your equipment for social life.

The worst of it is, that there is such a wide difference between the application of titles in writing or in speech, so that after you have mastered the first part of the lesson, it seems as though you had to forget half of it before you can go on. There are so many titles which must not be omitted in writing which are always left out in conversation. Nobody ever talks about a Marchioness, for example, and it

would be very vulgar to call anyone the Honourable Miss So-and-So, as you sometimes hear people do on the stage. However, I will go through all the titles from beginning to end; then you will have something to appeal to when in doubt.

I do not suppose it will ever fall to your lot, my dear Letty, to have to write to the Queen, but if it did, this would be the proper way to do it. You would write "Her Majesty the Queen," at the top of the letter, and commence "Madam," ending thus:—

"MADAM,

"I have the honour to subscribe myself,

"With profound respect,

"Your Majesty's

"Most devoted Subject and Servant."

Other Royalties are addressed as follows:—
To his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales,
To her Royal Highness (or her Serene Highness,
as the case might be) the Princess (or Duchess)
of So-and-So. You commence a letter to the
Prince with "Sir," and conclude—"I remain

your Royal Highness's dutiful and obedient servant." I don't know whether you will ever have to write to a duke, Letty. They are plentifully distributed in the pages of three-volume novels, but in real life they are more like the old countryman's idea of heaven ("There'll be vary few on 'em," he said; "I shall be there, and one or two more, but there'll be vary few!") Well, if such an occasion arises, and you were writing a duke a formal letter, such as to ask him to open a bazaar, you would address the letter "To his Grace the Duke of A——," commencing "My Lord Duke." His intimates would simple write "My dear Duke," and address the letter to the Duke of A——.

I notice you have got rather muddled over dowager duchesses, and you can't understand why some of them are addressed "as such," and others have their Christian name before their title. The Right Honble. the Dowager Duchess of So-and-So is the more formal style (acquaintances omitting the prefix Right Hon. as a matter of course). Maria, Duchess of Dash, is the alternative form; and it is a pretty one, *don't you think?*

Now, let us see what other titled personages there are whom it might fall to your lot to address. A marquis—address “The Most Honble. the Marquis of Dash,” and commence, “My Lord;” an Earl—address, “To the Right Honble. the Earl of Dash,” also commencing “My Lord;” a viscount—“To the Right Honble. Viscount Dash,” with the same beginning. The younger sons and daughters of a duke would be addressed the Lord A. B. or the Lady A. B.; the daughters and younger sons of a marquis should be addressed the Lady Mary Dash, or the Lord John Dash. The younger sons of earls take the courtesy title of Honourable, as you know. You address their letters to the Honble. John Smith, and you would put the same on the top of their invitation card, although you never mention this title in conversation, nor does its owner put it on his visiting-card. A baron is addressed, “To the Right Honble. Lord Blank,” and you commence “My Lord.” A baroness is formally addressed “To the Right Honble. the Lady Burdett-Coutts.” A baronet or knight would be addressed as “Sir John Blank,” commencing “Sir.” Remember that their wives *must simply* be addressed by their title

and surname, never with the Christian name as well, as though they were the daughters of a peer.

You must also remember that "The" must always be placed before the titles of Lord, Lady, or Honourable, when the title belongs to a peer or peeress, or their son or daughter, but not before a "Lady" who is the wife of a baronet or knight.

You ask me what you are to do about the title "Lieutenant" — you are always getting scolded by Lady Highflyte, whether you put it on the envelope or whether you don't. Now, Letty, surely you know that it is right to mention it if it belongs to the navy, and wrong if it belongs to the army! You see, it is a much higher rank in the navy, so must not be omitted. Your cousin in the navy, then, must be addressed as follows: "Lieutenant John Smith, R.N.," but if you are writing to George Highflyte, only put "George Highflyte, Esq." (adding the name of his regiment if he is on service), or he will think the letter comes from a dun.

The higher ranks of the army will probably *not concern* you so much. However, in case

Lady Highflyte may sometimes ask you to write an invitation to dinner to some old General, I may remind you that military rank precedes any other title ; you would write "General Lord John Blank," "Colonel Sir George Dash," and so on. The proper abbreviation for Captain is "Capt." Clerical rank also precedes any secular title ("To the Rev Sir John Blank, M.A.," will furnish an example of what I mean); even the old familiar form of "Hon. and Rev." is now superseded in favour of "Rev. and Hon." You would address a Bishop "The Right Rev. the Bishop of Dash"; a Dean, either "To the Very Rev. Z. Blank, D.D., Dean of St John's," or "To the Very Rev. the Dean of Chichester"; an Archdeacon would be addressed "To the Ven. Archdeacon Blank"; and you will write "To the Rev. J. Blank, D.D.," or "To the Rev. Dr Blank" to a Doctor of Divinity, and "To the Rev. John Blank" to the rest of the clergy. Of course, you must remember to write M.P. after Esq. when you are writing to a member of Parliament.

Now, I am sure you will think all this a most dreadful trouble to learn, and after this,

as I said before, comes the trouble of what to forget! For you must not go about the world talking about Marchionesses and Earls—you would say Lord or Lady So-and-So instead. Dicken's Marchioness was the only member of the aristocracy who was ever addressed by that title. Then do not say Lady *Alice* Smith when you are talking about a baronet's wife, thereby exalting her to the rank of the daughter of a peer; and, whatever you do, never introduce anyone as the Honourable So-and-So—say Mr, Mrs or Miss, as the case may be. There is a proper way for addressing everybody, and a different style for equals and superiors. The Queen is called "Ma'am" by the members of the aristocracy, and "Your Majesty" by the middle and lower classes. At one time the Queen was the only person who was addressed as "Ma'am," but lately it has been extended to all the Royal Princesses. The Prince is always addressed as "Sir" by the aristocracy and gentry, but "Your Royal Highness" by other classes. Now, a foreign prince, on the contrary, would be addressed as "Prince," and not as "Sir," by the aristocracy, and a foreign princess would be

styled "Princess," and not "Ma'am." An English duke would be called "Duke" by his friends, and "Your Grace" by his inferiors, but a French duke is addressed by his surname, with the addition of "Monsieur"; he is "Monsieur de B——" to the upper classes, and "Monsieur le Duc" to his inferiors. A marquis should be addressed as "Lord A——" in conversation, an earl, viscount, or baron the same. The eldest son of a duke takes his father's second title, and is called "Lord B——," but the younger sons are "Lord John B——" to their acquaintances, and simply "Lord John" to their friends. Their wives are also addressed as "Lady John" and "Lady Charles" by their intimates. A duke's daughters are addressed as "Lady Mary A——" or "Lady Jane B——" by strangers, and as "Lady Mary" or "Lady Jane" by their friends. The eldest son of a marquis is addressed as "Lord A——," his father's second title, the younger son as "Lord Henry A——." The eldest son of an earl would also take his father's second title, and be called "Lord A——," the younger sons only bearing the title of Honourable. A dowager duchess is the

widow of a duke, and you use either of the forms of address I am about to give, so as to distinguish her from the other duchess (her son's wife, for example).

All this will appear very dry and uninteresting to you, but I assure you it is highly necessary that you should master it. I heard an American girl covering a poor lady with confusion the other evening by addressing her constantly by her title, with both the Christian and surname added, when only the latter should have been used. "Oh, here is Lady Mary Smith!" she exclaimed, in a shrill voice which pierced through the rest of the conversation. "How do you do, Lady Mary Smith? So happy to meet you again!" Lady Smith, a sweet, amiable woman, who was the widow of the late Lord Mayor, nodded and passed on, looking painfully embarrassed at hearing herself so suddenly promoted to a superior rank. Her blushes produced no effect on the American lady, who looked after the retreating figure and then slowly remarked: "Why, how well Lady Mary Smith looks to-night!" The same lady made another mistake the same evening, when

I heard her addressing poor dear Mrs Barton as "Mrs General Barton." It sounded like the very height of vulgarity, but it seems that this form of speech is customary in America, although we think it so very dreadful over here. An English wife does not take any rank on account of her husband's official position; the wife of an officer in the army is simply Mrs A., or Mrs B., and a bishop's wife has no title on account of her husband's distinction. And talking of bishops reminds me, my dear, that you asked me to tell you what to call Bishop Blake when he came. You will call him "Bishop" when you speak to him, and Bishop So-and-So or "the Bishop" when you speak of him. Only absolute strangers or inferiors would call him "My Lord." You will call the Archdeacon "Archdeacon Dale," and the Dean "Dean Blank." Lady Highflyte calls him "Dean," but then she knows him very well.

Good-bye for the present, dearest Letty. Forgive this long sermon from your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

VI

WALKING, DRIVING AND RIDING

I AM glad you were pleased with my last letter, in spite of the many dry details it contained, and I daresay it may get you out of many little difficulties if you keep it, as you suggest, and consult it from time to time.

To-day I am going to write about more ordinary matters — the little difficulties which may meet you in your daily walks — when to bow, when to pass on, the proper way to get in and out of a carriage.

When I was a girl, my dear Letty, much less licence was allowed me in the matter of my outgoings and incomings than falls to the lot of young ladies of to-day. My father never let me put my foot out of doors without a companion; nay, he did not consider that my sister was sufficient protection; he did not like me to walk abroad without a chaperon.

Well do I remember how these restrictions used to chafe me. I could well have said, with the heroine of *The Master Builder*, I had no home, I only had a cage. Much more liberty falls to the lot of modern girls than was ever enjoyed in my young days, and if you fancy you are restricted, Letty, it is only because you feel the necessary trammels of town life a little severe after the perfect freedom of the country. You are virtually free to do nearly whatever you like. You would not walk in the Park by yourself, especially on Sunday, nor would you be seen alone in a crowded thoroughfare very late in the afternoon; but otherwise you can go about very much as you please, and as long as you go along quietly no one will ever remark you.

A quiet demeanour is highly necessary for the street, and loud conversation is simply unpardonable. Be especially careful never to mention names loudly in any public place. Do not loiter before shop windows, and never turn your head and look round in the street; it is vulgar to the last degree. Do not wear anything *too* bright or remarkable when walk-

ing; keep all your bright colours for driving—it is proper to look smart in a carriage. Do not loiter in the street, of course, but do not fly along as if you were trying to catch a train. A graceful walk is a great charm, but you will attain to this chiefly through a plentiful use of gymnastics, dancing, and other exercises.

And now for what we may call the etiquette of walking—how you should walk and which side of the path you should take, and all those little things which, as you remark, you are supposed to know, but don't. Well, my dear, to begin with, you must remember always to keep to the right of the path—all collisions will be avoided by this means. When you are walking with a married lady remember always to allow her to precede you. But you will find that she will always give you the inside of the path; that is because you are a young girl, and supposed to need protection. A gentleman must also always let you walk inside, and this even if he has to change over constantly during the course of the walk. A gentleman would also *relieve* you of any small parcel with which

you happen to be burdened, and always give you precedence, except when it is necessary for him to lead the way. He would go first if he had to clear the way for you in a crowd, or to lead the way up or down stairs; if he were escorting you in a public dining-room he would lead the way to the table you were to occupy, you following immediately behind. Accept all attentions graciously, but as though they were your right; women rule society, and it is correct that they should receive courtesy and homage.

I see that you are in some little doubt what to do at times when you meet a country friend in town. You met someone from your old home last week, when you were walking with Lady Highflyte, and were afraid to introduce him because you were not sure whether she would like him or not. And you fancied you had heard me say that you were not bound to introduce a stranger if you happened to meet him when you were walking with a friend. Yes, that is quite right under ordinary circumstances, but not if you are staying with that friend. You must *introduce all your acquaintances to your chaperon.*

at once, whether they come into your box at the play, or whether you meet them in the street, as you did Mr Ironside. Effect the introduction directly you have shaken hands. She may like your friends, or she may not—you can't be sure about that—but, at anyrate, you will have done what is proper, and there is a great consolation in that. I may remark that the contrary rule holds good, and your hostess should introduce all her friends to you. I am sorry you feel so shy about bowing when you meet people; you must try to get over it, Letty, or you will never make any new friends.

It is the lady's place to bow first, and you will offend all your ballroom partners if you pretend you don't see them next day. You are not bound to bow to a man who has been introduced to you at a ball, only he won't have the courage to come up to you the next time he meets you at a dance if you cut him dead when you see him in the Park. You would not bow to anyone whom you only knew by sight, or who had offered you some slight attention in society, supposing that the introduction had *been made*. If you bow to a man who is

walking with a friend both take their hats off, although you only know the one. This is only proper civility on the part of the man's friend, but you would not dream of recognising him if you happened to meet him afterwards by himself.

If you are walking in the Park and meet the same people a number of times, you need only bow the first time you meet them. This often happens in the Row, or at the sea, so it is as well for you to know the correct course of conduct to be pursued. If you meet friends in the Park or elsewhere, you can stop and speak to them if you like, and, both in the Park, and at the seaside, a gentleman often turns back and walks beside you for awhile.

Driving occupies such a large space in the life of a society woman that I am sorry to think you find it such a dreary performance. Of course you often have to sit with your back to the horses, being a young girl, and that is also rather dull; and, as you are still rather shy with Lady Highflyte, the drive is not an unmitigated delight. Don't try and make conver-

sation if she does not seem to care for it. I know many people who don't much care to talk when they are driving.

You are staying in the house, and have many opportunities for conversation; it is not as if you went out to lunch somewhere and the lady of the house took you out for a drive because she wanted to have a quiet talk with you. Remember to get into the carriage gracefully, without haste, yet without hesitation. Bend your head slightly if it is a closed carriage. Always let a married lady precede you, except she is your hostess, when she will wish you to get in first. Now I will tell you exactly how to enter a carriage. If you are going to sit with your face to the horses, and there is one step to the carriage, put your left foot on it so as to enter the carriage with the right foot, and sink easily into your seat. If there are two steps, put your right foot on the first, your left on the second, and the same result is attained. If you are going to sit with your back to the horses the action is reversed, and you enter the carriage with your left foot. *When you are driving alone with Lady High-*

flyte, you enter the carriage first, and take the further seat, facing the horses, so that she is not obliged to pass you. If some other lady were driving with you also, you would allow her to precede you (as being the greater stranger), and you would sit with your back to the horses. The same rules must be observed in getting into a hansom cab as in getting into a carriage, but you should remember that the person who gets in first should sit on the near side, as it is easier for the person who gets in second to sit down on the further side. No one can quite explain why this should be so, but experience proves it is right. The person who sits on the further side (that is the one who gets in last) should be the one to alight first, if possible. A gentleman gets out of either carriage, cab, or railway carriage before a lady, in order that he may help her to alight.

I am so glad you are able to keep up your riding, dear Letty; I know that must be a great pleasure to you. Lady Highflyte is quite right not to let you ride in the Row unattended. It would look most unusual, Letty; it is not

like riding about the country lanes. You can ride with one of the Highflyte girls, or with old Sir Wilfred when he comes up to town. As for riding with young Mr Ironside, I think you had better consult Lady Highflyte about that; I should not object to your doing it occasionally, only do not do it too often, as people will say you are engaged.

I hope you have got a nice habit, Letty; something dark and simple, with nothing remarkable except the excellence of its fit. Let your hair be as neat as possible, and your whole appearance compact. You can wear a bowler hat if you join the Liver Brigade, but after breakfast you must wear the orthodox "topper."

I have lost your last letter, but I fancy you asked me for some directions about mounting. First, gather up your habit in your left hand, then place yourself as near the horse as possible, with your right hand on the pommel. The person who is assisting you then stoops and places his right hand with the palm upwards at a convenient distance from the ground. You then put your left foot into his hand, and *spring up into the saddle* as he lifts you.

I hope this letter will be useful to you, dear Letty, and that I have really told you what you want to know.—Believe me, dear niece, your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

VII

THE COUNTRY-HOUSE VISIT

YOUR long letter lies before me, dearest Letty, crossed and recrossed and written as hastily as though I had never held forth to you on the subject of correspondence, and the duty of saving your reader all unnecessary trouble. But never mind, my dear; I can see that your letter was written under circumstances of unusual excitement, and I will proceed at once to answer your questions without scolding you for the way in which they are put.

A first visit to a country-house is a great event to a girl, and I am sure you must feel as if you were spreading your wings for a solitary flight. You ought to have a delightful time, and I do hope that your unfortunate shyness will not turn your pleasure into a penance. Some of the happiest days of my *own girlhood* were passed in country-house

visiting, and I don't see why my dear Letty should enjoy herself less than I did. I will own that some little difficulties might arise which might make you wish you had a friend to consult, but I will do my best to forestall these troubles by a little advice beforehand. One thing you may be very glad of, Letty, and that is that Lady Percival has conformed to the modern habit of mentioning the length of the visit in her letter of invitation. She hopes you will be able to come to her on the 2d, and remain for the flower show which takes place on the 9th. You know exactly how long you are intended to stay, and you are relieved from the awkwardness of introducing the subject yourself. When I was young, you know, Letty, it was considered improper for a hostess to mention the time of your departure, but now it is generally done before you enter the house. This plan is really a great convenience both for hostess and guest, for life is so full nowadays, and we all have many engagements to fit in. Supposing, however, that Lady Percival had not mentioned the date of departure in her letter, I should have advised you to have broached the subject within a day or two of

your arrival. It is only considerate to your hostess to mention the extent of your visit as soon as possible, in case she is anxious to invite some other friend to take your place.

Don't take heavy luggage with you, Letty, it is such a tax on the servants. A cane dress-basket is perhaps the best thing, as it is at once large and light. Of course you must take your evening dress; you should never go away on a visit without one. Then you will want your riding-habit and your tailor-made gown, a smart visiting dress and a nice demi-toilette. I am not very fond of tea-gowns for young girls, but you may be glad to slip one on after a long ride or some other unusual exertion. Married ladies often wear them at dinner when they are in the country, but not if the house is full of company.

I believe that the Percivals live in a very luxurious style, and have an excellent staff of servants; but, however many servants they may have, Letty, I advise you not to be inconsiderate about giving them trouble. It is very unfair to go to stay in people's houses and make their *servant's* unsettled and discontented. Some girls

are very careless in their rooms, leaving their dresses all over the place, and everything in wild confusion. It is a matter of taste if you go on like this at home, but it is unpardonable to make so much work in other people's houses. Another point to be considered is punctuality—a quality which is said to be the politeness of kings, and might also be called the politeness of guests. Try to be always in good time for meals, and do not keep the carriage waiting when you are invited to take a drive. People are not supposed to wait dinner for a guest who is staying in the house, though they always do so if they are giving a dinner-party, as you know. They are not obliged to wait dinner for their house-guests, but they often do, all the same, and your unpunctuality makes things uncomfortable in either case.

There is plenty of liberty about life in a country-house, and I am happy to say the day is past when your hostess thought she must be trying to entertain you from morning till night. The mistress of the house generally disappears between breakfast and lunch; she busies herself about her own affairs, and allows her guests to

do the same. But there is a certain sense in which you are not quite free when on a visit, and that is with regard to the engagements you make with outside friends. You should never accept an invitation without consulting your hostess, and although you will naturally wish to take the opportunity of seeing any friends you may happen to have in the neighbourhood, you must not be out so much that you appear to be turning your hostess's house into an hotel. Try to contribute to the happiness of the house in which you are staying. Join in whatever amusement is proposed, and do your best to make things go. Be good-natured and kind to everybody, sing and play when you are asked, and don't be above playing a waltz when an impromptu dance is proposed. But I think I need scarcely tell my dear Letty all this; ill-nature is not numbered amongst her faults; on the contrary, I am disposed to think she scarcely thinks enough of herself, but is too ready to put herself in the background on every possible occasion. Perhaps I shall be wiser if I remind you that you must not be too much surprised at the attentions you will receive as a guest; it is

correct for your hostess to pay you these attentions, and you must receive them as graciously as they are offered. When you are asked whether you would like to walk or drive, for example, it is proper for you to say which you would rather do. Your entertainers only desire your happiness, and if you refuse to avow your preference you make their task more difficult. It is right that your hostess should allow you to precede her in getting into the carriage, and right that she should make you sit beside her, always supposing that no married lady is driving with you at the same time. All these little attentions must be accepted gracefully, and not as if you were unaccustomed to being made much of. Do not be afraid of being *de trop* when your hostess takes you to call on country neighbours. It is customary to call in large parties in the country—it is quite different from town, where more than two or three people never call together.

It is impossible to like everybody equally well, but I do hope you will get on nicely with all the other visitors. The cliques in country-houses are something fearful, but I hope you will not

allow yourself to be drawn into "taking sides." Even if someone with whom you are not on good terms is included in the house-party you must not quarrel with her whilst you are staying under the same roof. Such conduct would be most unkind to the hostess, so, even if there had been a quarrel beforehand, I should counsel a truce being maintained during the visit. But by all accounts you will be a most harmonious party at the Towers, and I am glad Mr Ironside and his sister are to be there, as it will be nice for you to have someone that you know. I hope that you will have a happy time, Letty, and that you will not feel shy and "out of it," as your letter seems to suggest.

A glance at your letter reminds me that I am rambling on about all manner of possible contingencies, whilst I have not answered half the questions you have asked. I see you want to know whether it is your place to propose retiring for the night or whether you ought to leave it to the hostess. That is a question which has puzzled many older heads than yours, for there are many arguments on both sides. I must hasten to tell you that it is the hostess's place to suggest

retiring, and that the guest ought not to be the one to break up the party.

I am so glad your first visit to the Towers will be paid during the hunting season, and am sure you will never forget your first sight of a run. A hunt breakfast has an aspect of picturesqueness all its own, and is like no other kind of gathering. You need not worry about being down to the minute on this occasion, as the meal is laid like a lunch, and people come and go as they please. You had better come down all ready dressed—come down in your habit if you are going to ride, or in your tailor-made gown if you are going to drive to the meet. The breakfast takes the form of a cold collation, with great urns of tea and coffee on the table; wine and liqueurs are placed on the sideboard in case any of the gentlemen prefer them. All manner of people come in and accept the proffered hospitality, and it is a most busy and amusing scene. Gentlemen who are riding to hounds come in even if they are perfect strangers to the host, and ladies come as well if they are acquainted with the family, or introduced by a mutual friend. The mistress of the house is always present (generally dressed in her riding-

habit, all ready to set off). At one time the hostess used to receive the ladies in the drawing-room, and have refreshments brought to them there, but now she is more often to be found in the dining-room or hall, so as to welcome the visitors directly they appear.

I suppose I need not remind you how important it is that you should use the correct hunting terms when speaking to sportsmen. You know that the dogs are called hounds, and a good day's hunting is spoken of as a "good run," and that you would put yourself quite outside the pale of society if you spoke of a fox's brush as a tail. I am so glad you will be able to join in the fun—how nice of Mr Ironside to offer you a mount! There is no harm in your accepting the loan; it is not as if it caused him inconvenience, and you have known him sufficiently long not to mind being under a slight obligation to him. You will require a lead whilst hunting. Take care not to follow too closely when taking a ditch, or you will get into the way of your lead.

I don't think I have anything else to tell you, dear Letty. Of course you must give

something to the maid-servant who has waited on you, and to any other servant who has done you any special service. Gratuities are not given to the cook, and a young lady is not expected to tip the men-servants, with the exception of the coachman who fetches her from the station.

Adieu, dearest Letty, and may you have as pleasant a time as I wish you! I daresay you will be quite sorry when your visit comes to an end. Do not forget to sit down and write to your hostess the moment you get home, to thank her for the happy time you have had.

I must draw this long letter to a close. All love from your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

VIII

LUNCHEON PARTIES

I AM so happy to hear that your country visit was such a success, dearest Letty, though I am not altogether clear as to whether it was the moral support of my letters of advice that carried you through so triumphantly, or whether it was the agreeable behaviour of your friends the Ironsides. I am so glad that your old friends were so nice to you, and I am inclined to think you are right when you say that you "really think they were pleased you were there." It was pleasant for you to have Mr Ironside sitting next you at table, since you never feel shy with him, as you do with so many people, and you never feel as if he were laughing at you; and I am delighted that you enjoyed your day's hunting so much, and found the long ride home so agreeable. I don't quite see how it was that you both got lost, and were *late getting* home, but these things will

happen sometimes, and, of course, neither of you knew the country very well.

And now that you are back in town you feel that London is a dreary waste! The parties and plays have lost their savour, and you only wish you were back at the Towers, with every day of your visit to go over again! It is a great compliment to Lady Percival, I am sure, and I have always heard that she is a charming hostess; and if I were not rather an exceptional relation, I might be tempted to observe, "I told you so!" As it is, I will only record my pleasure that my prediction has come true, and proceed to answer the inquiries in the last part of your letter.

You tell me that you are invited to three luncheon parties next week, and that you don't feel at all sure how you are to behave. You say that everything in London seems so formal, and that going to lunch in town (even in the quietest way) seems to be a much more important affair than going to spend the day when you live in the country. You don't know what to say to the servant when he opens the door, whether to ask if the hostess is at home or not—whether

you ought to take off your hat when you go into the house, and when you take off your gloves and when you put them on. My dear Letty, so far as luncheon is concerned you appear to be in a parlous state. It will be better for me to tell you everything I can think of about this particular function from beginning to end.

In the first place, my dear Letty, when you are invited to lunch you should not ask whether the mistress of the house is at home; you should take that fact for granted and simply walk in as if you knew you were expected. If the servant does not quite understand that you are an *invitée*, you should say: "Lady A. expects me." If you are wearing a heavy wrap, you can say to the servant, "I will leave my cloak," and he will either relieve you of it in the hall or show you into an ante-room or library where you can lay it down. If you were only wearing a smart, tight-fitting jacket, however, you would probably keep it on, and in no case must you remove your hat or bonnet; nor should you take off your gloves till you are seated at table.

You will now be shown into the drawing-room, where you will be received by your

hostess, and made acquainted with the other guests. Introductions are generally effected in a very informal manner at a luncheon party, a hostess often introducing a gentleman to two or three ladies at the same time (if they happen to be sitting together), so that they may enter into conversation at once. She would say, "Mr So-and-So, Mrs Blank, Miss Dash," instead of making careful and separate introductions as she would do at a dinner party. There is more licence allowed as to the time of arrival at a luncheon party than there would be at a dinner. Punctuality is desirable, if possible, but the morning is such a busy time in town that it is not always easy to be quite up to time. A quarter of an hour's grace is generally allowed, and then the party would go into lunch, any late-comers being shown straight into the dining-room, when they would make their way to the hostess and apologise for their lateness before taking their places. This is rather an ordeal for a shy person, so I would not advise my Letty to attempt it; besides, she is not like a much-engaged person, whose unpunctuality might more easily be excused.

Lunch is rather a feminine meal, as a rule, but when a formal luncheon party is given the hostess makes a point of inviting as many gentlemen as ladies, and sometimes she arranges them carefully, putting the name-cards in the plates, though it is more usual to leave it to chance. No precedence is observed about going in to lunch, except that if the host is present he escorts the lady of highest rank. The butler announces luncheon, saying, "Luncheon is served," and the hostess attracts the attention of the lady of highest rank present, saying, "Shall we go downstairs?" or something to that effect. The host leads the way, with the lady of highest rank, though it is not necessary for him to offer his arm as he would at a dinner-party. The other ladies follow without regard to precedence (though my little Letty would naturally adhere to her usual rule of letting the married ladies go first); the hostess comes next, and the gentlemen follow her. When the dining-room is reached each gentleman takes a seat beside a lady, in order that he may attend to her during lunch. At *a set luncheon* party the waiting is done by

the servants, but on an ordinary occasion the servants are often dispensed with as soon as possible; and in this case the gentlemen are expected to make themselves useful.

Conversation should be general at lunch, and I fear that that is always a trial to a young girl. I remember when I was young how I used to dislike a general conversation, I used to be so shy at the sound of my own voice. However, you must try to overcome this feeling, Letty, and after all, a young girl is not supposed to lead the conversation, although she is expected to be interested in what is going on, and to take her share in the talk. A dinner party often resolves itself into a series of *tête-à-têtes*, but this is not so usual at lunch, when the hostess generally talks across the table, and addresses her friends in turn, and everyone brings out any amusing tale or interesting piece of news of which he may happen to be possessed. You must learn to be interested in general conversation, and not be like those rude girls at the Rectory, who used to whisper loudly to one another all the time that Mr Fourstars was telling us his most amusing tales.

It used to be the fashion to have very little waiting at lunch, but the modern fashion of serving the meal *à la Russe* makes a good deal of attendance necessary. In many houses, the servants stand in a row in the passage leading to the dining-room, and enter the room after the guests have taken their places and proceed to hand them the different dishes. They then take up their positions behind the guests' chairs, so as to be ready to change their plates when required. In smaller establishments the different dishes are placed on the table, the guests help themselves and each other, but the host undertakes most of the carving.

Lunch should never be an ostentatious meal; it should be dainty, but not too elaborate. Soup is sometimes served, and also fish, but lunch more often consists of roast or boiled *entrées*, dressed fish, sweets and savouries. The cheese course is generally rather a feature, as many people do not eat sweets in the middle of the day. A little fruit is offered at the conclusion of the meal, but no other kind of *dessert*. Claret and sherry are the usual

wines offered at lunch, but champagne is often given if it is an invitation party. Serviettes are given at lunch, but fish-knives are not needed, because the fish is nearly always "dressed"—and a mayonnaise, or fish *entrée*, would be eaten with the usual large dinner-fork. The roll is placed in the serviette, and the "cover" consists of three knives (two large and one small), two large forks and one small one, a tablespoon (if soup is served), a dessert-spoon for sweets, a tumbler, and two glasses—one for sherry and one for claret. Finger bowls are never given at lunch, because the dessert is not a special feature.

Although the guests may have arrived at different times they all leave the dining-room together, and it would be considered incorrect for anyone to leave earlier, unless he had some special appointment. At a lunch party people are more or less punctual, but at houses where general invitations are given to this meal it often happens that some guests arrive when the others have almost finished. This is particularly the case on Sundays, when many hostesses keep open house, as it were, during the luncheon

hour. When lunch is finished the hostess gives the signal for departure, by attracting the attention of the most distinguished lady present, rising from her seat at the same time. The host opens the door (or the gentleman who happens to be nearest it can do so), and the ladies adjourn to the drawing-room. The gentlemen remain in the dining-room for a few minutes, if the host is there to keep them company, but if he is absent they follow the ladies into the drawing-room at once.

Coffee is sometimes served at table, with liqueurs, and sometimes handed round in the drawing-room. When you return to the drawing-room you should put on your gloves quietly, and after chatting for twenty minutes take your leave. Lady Highflyte will doubtless send the carriage for you, and the servant will come and tell you when it arrives. Shake hands with your hostess, and also with any of the guests whom you know well, and include the rest of the company in a general bow. Not an easy thing to do, Letty! There is nothing so difficult as a general bow, and it is much easier to leave a room well than to enter it.

The French declare that no Englishwoman knows how to get out of a room with grace. Try to be an example to the contrary; walk gracefully to the door, and look round just as you are leaving, so that people may watch your bright face vanish with regret.

Good-bye for the present, dearest Letty! I wish that that bright face was here!—Ever
your loving Aunt

PRISCILLA.

IX

DINNER PARTIES

"WHY will they ask me to their horrid dinners?"

Well, Letty, I never heard such an ungrateful remark to make on the reception of an invitation. It is evident you are not much addicted to the pleasures of the table, or you would not despise an invitation to the Wollastons, who are noted for their good dinners, and own a very celebrated *chef*. You are not like Miss Cobbe, who says she always used to enjoy her dinner parties in London, because, even if she were so unfortunate as to have a dull neighbour, she could always be interested in the contents of her plate. You do depend upon your neighbour frightfully at a dinner party, no doubt, and it is very sad when fate assigns you a mere nonentity, or some frightful bore, by whose side you have to sit for two mortal hours at a *stretch*.

I suppose a dinner party is really something of an ordeal to a girl, and when I was young we used not to be asked to many of them. I well remember the nights when our elders went off to these functions, and the fun we used to have up in the schoolroom when we had watched my father hand my mother into the carriage in his stately fashion. My mother used to go off in velvet and old lace—which we did not then appreciate—and she used to wear the family diamonds, which we then thought very beautiful, but which I now know to have been truly hideous, and my sister-in-law would never wear them until they were re-set. I believe our own dinner used to resolve itself into late supper on these nights, and we used to dance in the schoolroom or roast chestnuts by the fire, and go in for many unhallowed diversions. We used to like to hear all about our parents' festivities next day, but I know we never longed to participate in them.

Society has greatly changed since I was young, and the last time I was in town I noticed how many more young ladies were invited to dinner than used to be the case. They

dressed more handsomely and wore more jewels than would have been considered correct long ago; although tiaras and necklaces are still left for the married ladies. I must say I like to see a pretty young girl with a nice diamond star in her hair and a pendant glittering at her throat. It is proper to dress smartly for a dinner party—a good gown is a compliment to the hostess, and it is never wasted as it might be in a crush. You should regulate your dress by the season of the year. People do not dress so much for winter dinner parties as they do during the season. I always like to see the dinner dresses then—they are nearly always made out of the Court trains. Every Drawing-room dress can be turned into two dinner gowns, as you know, and it is pretty to watch the women enter the room, glittering with jewels and clad in those wonderful brocades which change like mother-o'-pearl with every movement of the wearer.

There are two kinds of dinner invitations, Letty—the formal and the informal. You must write your reply in the same style as the *invitation*, so I will give you the form for both

cases. The formal invitation is couched as follows:—

“Mr and Mrs Wollaston request the pleasure of Miss Letty Lavender’s company at dinner, on Monday, December 4th, at 8 o’clock.

30 Berkeley Square.

R.S.V.P.”

The whole of this invitation will be printed with the exception of the names and dates. You notice that the husband’s name figures in the invitation—for a dinner forms an exception to the general rule, that all invitations are sent out in the name of the mistress of the house. The correct form of acceptance is as follows:—

“Miss Letty Lavender has much pleasure in accepting Mr and Mrs Wollaston’s kind invitation for Monday, December 4th.”

If you can’t accept, you must say that you regret that you are unable to accept their kind invitation, owing to a previous engagement. The informal invitation is written in the first person, and must be answered in the same way. You should always answer an invitation to dinner on the day on which you receive

I would advise you to make a very careful toilette before you start for your dinner party, because you will have no subsequent opportunity for finishing touches. When I was young, we used always to be shown into a bedroom on our arrival, and we used to get a good look at ourselves in the glass, and adjust a stray lock if it had become disarranged during the drive. But nowadays you simply give your cloak to the servant when you arrive, or even if he shows you into a library or ante-room there is seldom a mirror in which you can see yourself, now that this æsthetic craze has caused the art-upholsterer to place the looking-glasses so high that they can be of no possible use.

The man of the party waits outside the door whilst you leave your cloak, and you are waved on by one footman after another, until you finally arrive at the drawing-room door, which the butler flings open, and announces you. If you want to know how you have to enter the room, look at Mr Du Maurier's pictures in *Punch*. Over and over has he drawn the scene—the lady walking first, her daughters *under her wing*, and the men of the party

bringing up the rear. Your hostess shakes hands with each in turn, and you then seat yourself where you like and talk to any friends who may be there. If you see any gentleman you know, you should bow to him, and he will cross the room and sit down and talk to you, if he is disengaged.

Dinners get later and later in town, and there is a marked tendency amongst dinner guests to shorten their *mauvais quart d'heure* by arriving as late as they can. It is very inconsiderate to arrive late—guests ought not to try the patience of the hostess in this way. I hope that you will have someone nice to take you in to dinner, Letty. I daresay you will not care very much for rank or celebrity as long as your escort is pleasant and nice-looking—the former for choice. The host will bring him to you when dinner is announced (or a little time before), and he will give you his right arm, and take you down the stairs, conversing as you go. You always walk next the wall in going downstairs, for fear you might catch your dress in the balusters.

You must let all the married ladies precede

you in going in to dinner, for precedence is strictly observed at all dinner parties. It is like the law of the Medes and Persians, and cannot be tampered with. The method of procedure is always the same; the host leads the way, with the lady of most distinguished rank; the other guests follow according to their respective precedence, the lady of the house coming last, escorted by the most important gentleman guest. If any of the gentlemen are uncertain as to the order in which they should walk, it is the place of the hostess to set it right.

On entering the room, the lady whom the host has taken in to dinner seats herself at his right hand, and you and all the other ladies, my dear Letty, will seat yourselves on the right hand of the gentleman who has escorted you. Your name-card will show you where to sit, and the host will remain standing in his place till you are all seated, so that he may tell you where to go if you are in doubt.

Your escort, having found your place for you, *seats himself* beside you, when he has seen you

seated first, and you will be his particular care for the rest of the meal. He will talk a little, probably, to his other neighbour, too, for according to English etiquette this is allowable, though foreigners have a higher standard in this respect, it being incumbent on a French or Austrian gentleman to devote himself exclusively to the lady who has been committed to his charge. In England, however, it is very customary for a man to address a few remarks to his left-hand neighbour for the sake of politeness, if he happens to be acquainted with her, so you need not imagine you are being neglected if this happens to be the case. A large dinner party is apt to resolve itself into a series of *tête-à-têtes*, but you should always suspend your conversation if someone is trying to tell a story for the benefit of the entire company. A good hostess is not afraid of her own voice, but often addresses a remark to someone at a distance, if she wishes to give some good talker a chance of being heard.

Dinner *à la Russe* is universal in town, and I think you will prefer it to the more old-fashioned style which was usual in your country home. 1

hate to see joints on the table, don't you? I like to see the table covered with nothing but flowers and fruit; the meal becomes so much more ethereal under these circumstances. The dishes are handed to each guest in succession, ladies and gentlemen alike. When the host carves, the ladies are served first, but at dinner *à la Russe* the plates are simply handed to the guests according to the order in which they sit at table. The servants commence with the lady who sits at the right hand of the host, going next to the lady on his left, and then to each guest in turn; but at a large dinner party the dishes would be handed at either side of the table simultaneously. Do not keep the servants waiting longer than is necessary; make up your mind promptly whether to pass a dish or not, and help yourself carefully, but with as little delay as possible. Directly you sit down to table, take your serviette out of your plate, and put it on your lap, so as not to hinder the servants in handing the soup. Put your dinner roll on the left-hand side of your plate, the other side being occupied by your glasses. Then take off your gloves, and you will be ready to take your soup by the time it arrives. Avoid dropping your

gloves or serviette on the floor; a serviette is very apt to slip off a silk skirt, so if you think this is likely to be the case you had better tuck it under the point of your basque before you commence operations. Your "cover" consists of a table-spoon for soup, two large knives, a silver knife and fork for fish, three large forks, and a small knife and fork for *hors-d'œuvres*. Then you will have three wine glasses (for sherry, claret and champagne) and sometimes a hock glass in addition. You should eat oysters with an ordinary dinner-fork. Use a fork by itself whenever it is possible; never use a spoon by itself when you are eating sweets. Fruit tarts require a spoon and fork, but jellies and creams are eaten with the fork alone.

Girls do not generally take cheese at dinner, but if you take it you should cut it into small pieces with a knife, and place it on a little bit of bread or biscuit, which you should raise to your mouth by the finger and thumb of your left hand. The finger-bowl is placed on the dessert-plate, with a doyley beneath it, and a gold ice-spoon and a dessert knife and fork on either side. Place your finger-bowl, with the doyley underneath it, at the left-hand side of you

plate, a little to the front, and your dessert knife and fork at either side of your plate. The servant removes the ice-plate when it is finished with, and hands round liqueurs—which you, as a young lady, are not supposed to take. The gentleman who has taken you in generally looks after you nicely at dessert, peels a pear for you, and takes all trouble off your hands. If you are going to put on your gloves again you should do so when you have finished your dessert, but very few ladies take the trouble to put them on again after dinner, since wearing so many buttons has come into fashion.—Believe me, my dear Letty, your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

X

HOW TO BEHAVE AT A DANCE

HERE is your little letter, dearest Letty, and you would be surprised if you could guess how many memories it has evoked. I can remember how I felt when I was going to my first ball, and how the card of invitation looked like a little white gate which led to Paradise. But there seems to be a good deal of fear mixed up with your anticipations of pleasure, and even the fact that Edward Ironside is going to be there does not seem to console you altogether.

"I expect he has plenty of friends of his own," you say; "I daresay he won't dance with me at all." And you think you will look horrid, and you won't know how to behave, and you fear that the little country mouse will look very plain and simple by the side of her town cousins!

Ah, Letty, my dear, how I envy you your youth. Many years of experience would I give

for the sake of feeling once more those charming hopes and fears!

But I must forget my own first ball, and the white embroidered muslin which I thought so grand in those days; also that smart young aide-de-camp who was my first partner, and who was surely much better-looking than any of the young men are now. I must turn once more to your letter, and notice the points on which you say you require a little help, and if I can assist you in any way, dear Letty, you know how glad I shall be.

Your invitation card with "Dancing" in the corner gives no clue as to the size of the entertainment. All invitations to dances are alike; they are issued on the ordinary "At Home" card, with "Dancing" in one corner, and nothing except the hour named for arrival gives you a clue as to the kind of entertainment you may expect. But I am sure that the Fourstars' dance will be extremely grand, for I know so well the style in which they live, and I am sure that beautiful house full of flowers and palm-trees will look a veritable *fairyland* to my little girl, who is going to her

first dance. Of course you must wear a low dress, Letty; a demi-toilette is not proper for a ball; and a *débutante's* dress is always *white*, and not too elaborate in style. White satin covered with tulle or chiffon would be charming, and you should wear your pearl necklace, and carry a bouquet of white flowers or a white feather fan.

The same rules apply for going into a ball-room as for entering the drawing-room at a dinner party—the ladies enter first, the gentlemen follow them. I need not tell you that you should never take a man's arm when you are making your *entrée*; it would look dreadfully vulgar to do so. If a woman is to succeed in society she must be able to stand alone, and times are changed since our grandmothers ambled through life on their husbands' arms. So enter the room with as much graceful confidence as you can command, walking beside Lady Highflyte, just a little to the rear if possible, the men of your party coming last and making a good background for you with their black coats.

First shake hands with your hostess, whom you will find at the head of the stairs, and then

pass on into the ballroom in the way I have described. And "How are you to behave?" you ask. It is most difficult to tell you in a letter; if I were in a ballroom with you I could point you out fifty different girls whose behaviour I do not admire, but it is difficult to explain in writing just what it is they do that I don't like. I should not like you to be like the Sanderson girls, with their bold stare; nor like the Wollastons, with their affected airs; and not for all the world like little Miss Hunt, who is always saying the unkindest things about the other girls in such a sly and insinuating way. Everybody flirts more or less, nowadays, so I won't lay a veto on that; only don't make yourself noticeable with any one person—it would be very bad to get talked about in your first season.

A popular girl is no trouble to her hostess or her chaperon; she is besieged with partners the moment she enters the room, and her chaperon has very little of her company as long as the dancing is going on. Sometimes the young girl comes to her chaperon just before a waltz to beg her to take care of her flowers or her fan, and *before she goes down to supper she generally*

reports herself, saying: "I am going down to supper, mother dear."

Society is more lenient in many ways than formerly, and sitting out on the stairs or in cosy corners now and again is not considered a proceeding to be censured, as it was in my young days. But there are limits to all things, and I would advise you never to sit out two or three dances in succession—it would be considered "bad style," and when women say that about a girl it is virtually "all up" with her. There are other things which are also bad style which I would advise you to avoid. Always act as if you considered your hostess, and had not come out merely for selfish enjoyment. Supposing a girl has a brother or a cousin who dances beautifully, it would be very bad style for her to dance with him the greater part of the evening, merely because his step suited hers. There is no harm in her keeping a dance for him if she has one to spare, but if they kept together all the evening it would look as if they were trying to show off their dancing, or else that they did not care to mix with the company they were in.

It is always rather a trying moment for the *débutante* when she is wondering if anyone is coming up to ask her to dance! She tries to look unconcerned and fails; assumes an expression which is almost aggressive, or plunges into conversation with her chaperon, and perhaps cuts a nervous young man dead just as he is on the point of coming up to invite her to dance, simply because she is so afraid he might think she was anxious about it. It is rather a difficult position, Letty, but men would be worse than we are if the position were reversed. I know when I went to Mrs Fourstars' Leap-Year Ball the men looked such pictures of abject misery that it was absolutely painful to see them.

If I might give you a word of advice as an old stager, I would say, cast your bright eyes round the room as you enter it, and bow pleasantly to anybody you know directly you get the opportunity. It looks so much better to recognise your gentlemen acquaintances at once, in a natural way, than to bow just before a dance begins, when they are supposed *to be looking* for partners. But I expect you

will not have to remain long in this embarrassing position; you will meet plenty of people you know, and Mrs Fourstars is such a good hostess, she is certain to look well after my little girl at her first ball.

Ball room introductions are made as follows:—

Your hostess says: "May I introduce Mr So-and-So to you, Miss Lavender?" and you answer: "I shall be very pleased." She then brings the young man along, and having attracted the attention of both parties, says: "Mr Dash, Miss Lavender," and at once leaves you together. Merely bow and smile; never rise when a man is introduced to you. And pray remember never to say: "I have been introduced to Mr So-and-So," or "he gave me three dances." (Really and truly, Letty, I heard a young girl say that the other day, in all good faith.) These errors would be simply horrible, and would not be overlooked. Many little mistakes are passed over with a girl, but not anything which shows that she has got an entirely wrong way of looking at things. Women regulate society, and they must never make themselves cheap. Every woman is a queen, and she must learn to accept

homage. Say "Mr So-and-so was introduced to me, and I gave him three dances"—not the other way about. Never dance with any man who does not make you appear to advantage; don't allow your partner to hold your hand out as if it were a pump-handle, or to whirl you round faster than you like. If he dances badly, simply stand still, say you are tired, or that you would like to watch the others a little—never permit him to make a sight of you, for people might think it was your fault. If you want to stop dancing say so; a man is supposed to go on waltzing as long as his partner likes.

It is not a bit of good for me to tell you how many times you may dance with Edward Iron-side if he is there. I know perfectly well you won't keep to it if I tell you. Well, three times is supposed to be the discreet limit, but society is a little more lenient now in this, as in many other things, and I think on the whole girls have a far better time than they used. We had nothing so lively as a barn-dance in my young days, and as to the kitchen-lancers, which I so often hear of now in country-houses, our mothers would have fainted at the sight of them! Decidedly life is *pleasanter* to girls than it was; it is not the

fashion to be prudish, and I would not have you so; only there are certain little things which I would always wish my Letty to avoid, and she must not mind my warning her about them, as it is all meant in good part.

A girl never wants to eat much at a dance, but still it is as well to go into the refreshment-room sometimes, when you are invited, as a man often asks you because he wants something himself, and he can't go and have it alone. Don't stay out of the ballroom too long. If a man is too much inclined to linger, you can always say: "Don't you think we ought to go back?" rising at the same time to show that you mean it. Never take off your gloves in the refreshment-room, and I daresay you won't require to do so at supper either—it depends entirely on what you eat. A girl's ball supper is generally a hasty meal; she is longing to be back in the ballroom, as a rule, and does not want to spend time on that process of "buttoning and unbuttoning" which was supposed to have driven the German gentleman to suicide. But if you were eating grapes, or anything of that kind, you would have to remove your gloves for fear of spoiling them.

You are not likely to attain the height of indifference about your gloves which was recommended to me once by Max O'Rell. He came up to me at a garden party last season, bearing a particularly delectable piece of confectionery. "Try this cake," said he. "It will spoil your gloves, but *it is worth it.*"

But a twenty-button glove is a consideration to its owner, and besides, Letty, like all other girls, will cherish the laudable ambition to leave the ballroom looking as neat and dainty as when she entered it.

Remember that the man who takes you in to supper is the person to look after you, and that you will offend him if you let other people wait on you instead. And do not go back into the ballroom with anyone but him, even if you come across other people whom you very much prefer. You know I am anxious that you should not be shy and formal, but these little courtesies should never be forgotten, even when they involve a certain amount of sacrifice.

Adieu for the present, dearest Letty; I wish I could see you setting out for the ball! And I hope you may have a lovely time, and enjoy yourself as much as could be wished by your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

XI

ON BEING ENGAGED

I LITTLE thought, my dear Letty, when I wrote my last letter to you, on what a very important subject I should write my next epistle! My little Letty! Barely out, so timid, and so wanting in self-confidence; and to think that your fate is already settled, and you should have gone and got engaged at your very first ball! Well, I am truly surprised, my dear. I did not expect it so soon, though I can't say I am so utterly astonished at Edward Ironside's proposal as you seem to have expected me to be. I have always fancied he cared for you before you went to town, and I felt it was not entirely accident that brought you so often together of late. But I never breathed a word of it in my letters to you, for I knew you were just the kind of girl who would never have looked at him again had such a thing been hinted.

I am so glad that the ball was such a brilliant success, and that you had such a number of partners, and such a thoroughly happy time. His sending you the bouquet beforehand must have made you feel happy to begin with, and when you got to the house, there was he standing in the doorway looking out for you, and not dancing with anybody till you came! And all your shyness went away like a cloud when you saw your dear friend, with his eyes shining with pleasure at the sight of you, and you felt you were not a little waif and stray in the crowd, but of the highest consequence to someone—the only person he cared for in the room. And though Edward is not really so very much older than you, there is something so protective in his manner that he seemed to make you feel at ease and safe, like a boat that has got into harbour. And then came the dances, and the crowds of partners, and the horrid old baronet you didn't like, and Edward took you away from him, and you two hid away in the conservatory so that Sir Mervyn shouldn't find you, and somehow it all came about in the most natural way in the world! Do you know, I have

cried a little over your letter! I am so glad for you, Letty, and I feel you will be so happy, and yet I could almost have wished it had not come to you quite so soon. But I am sure you have made a good choice, and that Edward Ironside, who has known you ever since you were a little girl, must seem doubly precious to you now that you are in the midst of strangers, with no one of your very own to consult.

And now you want a whole heap of advice from your aged aunt, for life has become very important to you, and you don't want to make a false step at starting. I am glad you made up your mind to tell Lady Highflyte at once, for it would have been very improper to have kept her in the dark, as you are staying in the house, and she is responsible for you to your father. I can quite understand your feeling that you would like to have kept it to yourself a little time; but it would not have been right under the circumstances. I am sorry she is a little disappointed; I suppose she would have much preferred your accepting Sir Mervyn. About telling other people. Your father must be told at once, and I am glad you have taken

your loving aunt into your confidence. Edward must also tell his own people ; but there is no occasion to be in a hurry to inform the rest of the world. A girl's mother is the proper person to inform relations of an event of this character, but in your case I suppose your father will take this office upon himself ; or I will do it for you, if you like. An engagement is not generally announced formally, only the relations and intimate friends are told, as a rule, and then the news gradually gets round.

I don't know whether Lady Highflyte will wish to announce your engagement in the paper. The mother of the *fiancée* is the proper person to send in the announcement ; in your case Lady Highflyte will take her place. I don't know what my mother would have said had it been suggested to her that she should announce our engagements through the medium of the press ! But ideas have greatly changed upon that point, and we seem fast approaching to the condition of the Germans, who have a special column in the daily papers, in which all such events are chronicled under the heading of "Verlobt."

You ask me what you are to do with regard

to Edward's relations. You must wait for them to make the first advance. His mother is certain to write to you at once, to welcome you into the family. If she signs herself "your affectionate mother," or calls you her "dear daughter that is to be," you should begin: "My dear mother, if I may call you so." Be sure to reply at once, and let your letter be written in the same style as hers. If any of his relations are in town they should call on you at once, and you should not go to them until they do. The only exception would be in the case of an old or delicate person, such as his aunt Lady Leyton, for example. She will probably write to you to say that she is sorry that she cannot come to see you, now that she is such an invalid, but she hopes you will come and see her. Then Edward should take you there as soon as possible, for the young should pay the aged all the attention in their power. When your *fiancé's* relations call on you, you should return their visits without delay. His mother will probably ask you to pay her a visit, as she lives in the country, and be sure you accept it if she does. Visits to your *fiancé's* relations come more under the head of duty than pleasure, as a general rule.

one has such an odd sense of being on approval, and if one could be Venus de Milo and George Eliot rolled into one, it is probable that one's *fiancés* relations would not consider one was good enough for the dear boy. It is the same thing with the girl's relations—they have wondered from time immemorial what Mary can have seen in John! But never mind, Letty, what anybody says to you; if you and he are happy, you each have your world in the other.

I fear your engagement will not be quite such a happy time to you as if you were staying in your father's house. Engaged couples always fancy they are in the way, and you will feel this more at Lady Highflyte's than if you had been at home. Of course, she will ask Edward to come in and out as he likes, but you must try not to be too much absorbed in one another's society. Of course, people will ask you both out a great deal, and you will always be sent down to dinner together; and when you are invited to a dance, your hostess will generally manage to send you a card for him, even supposing she is not acquainted with him. Do *not* make yourselves too conspicuous at a

dance; you may dance a good deal with him, of course, but do not keep together all the evening. As to how much you may go about together, you must be guided entirely by Lady Highflyte. She is your chaperon, you are staying in her house, and you must abide by her decision, whether you are inclined to rebel against it or not. Society is much more lenient to engaged couples than formerly, and they generally go about together a good deal. Perhaps it would be wise to draw the line at going unchaperoned to any place of public amusement, but even this is sometimes relaxed if the wedding is to take place very soon.

The probable length of the engagement is really the point on which it all hinges, Letty; if the wedding is to take place soon, it does not matter if everyone knows about it; but if the affair is to drag on for years, people will be tired of seeing the same two always together; and it is not wise to *afficher* it too much, for the sake of the unkind remarks which might be made about you if it had to be broken off. If your engagement were to be a very long one, it would be better taste not to go into society too much.

I always think an engagement has its trials,

and am not quite inclined to agree with the enthusiastic folk who declare that it is the happiest period of life. The first avowal of love—that is something to be remembered, and the early days of married life are very sweet, but I have some little doubt about the time of probation, the period when one seems to be in everybody's way. It is difficult not to be selfish at this time, it is hard to remember that the world contains other individualities besides our own. One goes through life apologetic, conscious that one is an incubus, yet uncertain how to avoid it. Then the introductions to the new relations are a terrible trial to a shy person—the feeling that even if one does one's very best, they would have liked one better had one's talents lain in an entirely different line. When I was a girl I had a good many accomplishments, but I remember how invariably your uncle's relations (after listening to my singing and piano-forte playing in utter silence) used to finish up by asking me whether I played the harp? Your uncle, you know, Letty, was exceedingly proud of me, and I remember how he once snuffed out this inquiry with the reply: "That is the only *accomplishment* Priscilla does not possess."

I have not said a word to you about your behaviour to Edward himself—I should somehow feel it impertinent, old woman as I am. And yet I should like to say, do not spoil him, dear child; be careful to exact just as much attention from him as before you were engaged. Do not flirt with other people, or let anyone in the world come between you; let him be always first to you, as he has chosen you to be first to him. But never let him relax the little attentions which he paid you before your engagement; you must not lose your dignity, nor would he love you better if you did. When once the relations between a man and woman get wrong, it is impossible for her to recover her position. She might begin afresh with someone else, profiting from the result of bitter experience, but she would never be happy again with the man of her choice. I say this to you, dear, because I know you are so sweet and amiable, and I am sure you will think I am right by-and-by, even if you do not see the wisdom of it to-day.

Good-bye for the present, dear Letty. Believe that you have all the love and sympathy of your very affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

XII

BRIDESMAID AND BRIDE

How strange it seems to me, the old aunt who knew you when you were a child—such a little time ago!—to be giving you advice about your wedding! My dear little Letty, who thought so little of herself when she left her country home, she has had her fate settled for her before the end of her very first season! How I wish I could be with you, dearest child; but if I can be of any use to you, with my long, rambling epistles, you know how happy I shall be to give you any advice you may require.

Your last letter is simply a mass of interrogation, relieved with spasmodic accounts of the entirely beautiful behaviour of Edward (who, indeed, seems to be everything my heart could have desired for my Letty), and a few brief notes of the wonderful gowns Madame Vanité is making for you, and the terrible amount of *time* she occupies in trying them on. But the

duties of bride and bridesmaid appear to be the *leit motif* of the letter, and I cannot do better than tell you all I can remember about the proper etiquette for both.

Your chief bridesmaid, I think, should be Edward's sister, since you have no sister of your own, and she is really your greatest friend. Your cousin should walk with her, as being your nearest relation, and after this the two Highflyte girls, and then the Selbys, who are so pretty and nice. If you have the little Parkinsons, they should come last; children look best at the end of a procession. Are you going to ask the little brothers to carry your train? I don't think I would, Letty; little pages look pretty, but they are awfully in the way, and they often stand on the train or manage it badly. If you decide on having them, do not let them hold the train itself; have two long loops of satin ribbon attached to it, and let them hold it up with these. But, personally, I do not advise you to have a Court train at all. I think it is not in good taste at a wedding, more particularly for such a youthful bride as my Letty.

It is your place to decide on the bridesmaids'

gowns, but it is not your place to pay the milliners' bills. Formerly the bride used to make her bridesmaids a present of their dresses, but this is never done now. You can either choose the colours and patterns, and send them in a letter, after you have obtained their acceptance of their responsibilities, or (what is nicer still) you can have a little tea-party, and call all the bridesmaids together and have a good talk about what they will wear. Edward must provide them with their bouquets, as well as a suitable souvenir of the occasion—some bangle, brooch, or pin. The bouquets must arrive on the morning of the wedding, the presents the day before.

Whilst I am on the subject of Edward's responsibilities, I will mention that it is his place to provide the house-linen, as well as the furniture, as I notice you are in doubt about the subject. This part of the business used once to be the place of the bride, but that is only a survival of the time when women were spinsters, in the literal sense of the word, and used to spend their girlhood in weaving the linen to fill the marriage chest. All the linen and silver,

and also the articles belonging to your own trousseau, should be marked with the name you will bear when you are married, otherwise it makes such confusion when you set up house-keeping.

"Who is to provide the carriages?" is your next question, and I must hasten to tell you that Edward has nothing to do with the matter, beyond providing the one in which he drives with you from the church to the house, and afterwards to the railway station. In old times, you know, it was the business of the bridegroom to provide the carriages, but this custom has been obsolete for years. The father of the bride provides the carriages in which she drives to the church, and the guests provide their own.

The wedding invitations are sent out either on large cards or small sheets of notepaper. I am inclined to prefer the latter plan, though it entails the extra trouble of folding. The invitations should be printed in silver, in small, neat type; anything florid looks in very bad taste. The form is exactly as follows:—

"Mr Lavender requests the pleasure of Mrs Marmaduke's company on Saturday, January the 9th,

on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter Letty with Mr Edward Ironside, at St Peter's, Eaton Square, at 2 o'clock, and afterwards at 9 Eccleston Square, S.W. R.S.V.P."

If your dear mother had been alive, of course her name would have figured in the invitation also. The bridesmaids must arrive at the church in good time, and wait for you until you arrive. In old times they used to wait in the porch, but this is never done now—they stand at the bottom of the church, near the font.

The mother of the bride usually stands near the group of young girls or the mothers of the bridesmaids take this place. In your case Lady Highflyte would be the person. Tell the bridesmaids to stand at either side, in their proper order, so that they can "fall in" and form a procession after you have passed through their lines. Take your father's right arm and walk up the church, your bridesmaids following two-and-two, the chief bridesmaid walking exactly behind you.

The bride's mother should follow the bridesmaids; she walks with her son, or some near

relative, and generally takes his arm. Lady High-flyte will take the place of your mother, and I am sure she will make a most creditable relation, with her fine appearance. The mothers of the bridesmaids should walk next, and stand as near the happy pair as they can. Groomsmen are out of fashion now, but you should get some of your gentlemen friends to act as stewards, and make themselves generally useful. They should wear a white rosette in their button-holes.

All the relations should have places at the top of the church: according to strict etiquette, the bridegroom's relatives should be seated on the right-hand side of the aisle, the bride's at the left, but I don't think people trouble about this nowadays. At anyrate, you must tell the stewards to see that the bridegroom's relations are well placed, and give them precedence throughout in every way you can.

Edward will, of course, be at the church in good time, in company with his groomsman, and he will wait for you at the right-hand side of the altar. When you arrive at the top of the church (and well I know what a journey it

seems, with the eyes of everyone on you!), when you get to the top you will stand at Edward's left hand, your father standing at your left hand (that is why you take his right arm going up the church), your other relatives group themselves near your father also, and the best man (who must be a bachelor) stands at Edward's right hand, a little to the rear. Take off your gloves at the commencement of the service and give them with your bouquet to the chief bridesmaid.

And now comes the service, and the clergyman's voice sounds like the booming of the sea, and you stand in a haze, and realise nothing till it is all over, and you take the bridegroom's arm (the left one, of course, which is nearest you) and go into the vestry to sign the register. The clergyman leads the way, and you are followed by your chief bridesmaids, the best man, your father, Lady High-flyte, and the most distinguished guests. You then sign the register (using your maiden name for the last time), and it is also signed by your father, the best man, your chief bridesmaid, and any old family friend. They all come round you in the vestry and offer congratulations, and shake hands; next the *Wedding March* strikes up, and you take Edward's

left arm and walk down the aisle, the bridesmaids following you in the same order as before.

I am a little amused at all your questions with respect to the precedence to be observed in coming down the aisle. Who is to go first? His relations or yours? And who is to walk with whom? My dear Letty, there is no precedence about coming down the church at a wedding (except it is a Royal one, of course); the bride goes first, as I have described, with her bridesmaids following, and no one would dream of leaving the church before she had left. The bride's mother goes next, escorted by her son or the most distinguished relative present, but after this it does not matter at all how people go—their only object is to get to the house as soon as possible.

The mother goes home in the first carriage she can find after the bride has left—it is almost the only occasion on which a hostess precedes her guests, but it is in order that she may get to the house to receive them when they come. The best man generally packs the bridesmaids off next—he ought to stay to the last, indeed, and see that everyone gets off all right. He has to look after the bridegroom, as you know; he has to see that

he does not forget the ring, and to take care of his hat for him (putting it in the vestry when he first arrives, and handing it to him when he is going away). He has also to pay the fees to the clergyman, the bridegroom giving him the money beforehand.

When you arrive at the house you will throw your veil back, for the sake of convenience, and you will stand in the drawing-room, in some part of it where you can be easily found, and receive the congratulations of your friends. The mantelpiece makes a nice background if the fireplace is filled with flowers; or you can stand under the chandelier, under a bell of flowers, or else against a curtain, as I saw a bride do the other day, with excellent effect. It was a deep blue curtain, the portière of a conservatory, if I remember aright, and her white dress stood out well against this background. The bridegroom will stand beside you, and receive congratulations also, and he should hold your bouquet for you, to get it out of your way. Lady Highflyte will stand just inside the drawing-room door, which will be open, and will *shake hands* with all the guests on arrival

(except those she has previously spoken to in church). The guests will then come straight on to you, and you must shake hands with all and receive their congratulations, and they will then go off to look at the presents.

The presents are sometimes arranged in the drawing-room, but more often in a separate room altogether—an ante-room or billiard-room. The latter would be the best plan in your case, as I remember it is a very handsome room, and a billiard-table shows off presents so well. If you use one of the drawing-rooms instead, the best plan is to place the presents on little tables, arranged against the wall, all the way round the room, and leave the centre free, so as not to impede circulation. The gifts should be classified as much as possible; the jewellery in one place, the silver in another—silver looks best on blue velvet. A few flowers are sometimes laid carelessly amongst the presents—roses or Japanese chrysanthemums, according to the time of year. The other day I saw a little orange-tree in a pot placed amongst the presents, and it looked the prettiest thing you ever saw. The cards which come with the presents must be placed

with each article — if no card is sent you must write the name on a slip of paper, and fasten it on instead. People usually send their visiting-card with a present, you know, with some little sentence such as “With Best Wishes,” or “Best Love,” or “Kindest Remembrances,” according to the degree of friendship entertained.

Of course you won't have a wedding breakfast —nobody ever does now—a “tea” is ever so much nicer, and then you can ask crowds of friends, and have a nice crush, which is ever so much better than the old formal affair. Have two long buffets, one for tea and sandwiches, the other for wine, with servants standing behind each. The tea and coffee should be placed in large silver urns ; the servants hand the cups across the table to the gentlemen, who wait upon the ladies. Some people serve the tea later on, in a separate room, but it is more usual to have it all going at once. You can either have the cake placed on the larger table, or on a separate stand (which can be hired from the confectioner's). Towards the end of the meal you will have to cut the wedding-cake. You have *only to cut* the first slice, or if you simply

make the first incision with the knife it will be sufficient. The butler finishes cutting up the cake, and small slices are handed round to the guests.

Speeches are very rarely made now at weddings; who can listen to them when there is so much bustle and confusion, and half the people are in one room, and half in another, wandering about and looking at the presents, and going into the refreshment-room when there is room for them? But the bride's health may be proposed, in a few well-chosen words, by the oldest friend of the family, or the most distinguished guest. The bridegroom would say a few words in reply; when there is a sit-down breakfast the bridegroom generally ends his speech with proposing the health of the bridesmaids, the best man returning thanks, but this is not done at a wedding tea.

When your health has been proposed it is time for you to disappear. Take your chief bridesmaid with you to assist you, and change your stately wedding-gown for your simple travelling-dress. And now comes the trying ordeal—the good-byes in the hall—the kisses and good wishes as you pass through the crowd, the tear kept back,

the parting smile, as you go away to your unknown future. Good-bye, dearest Letty, and may good fortune be yours! I cannot be with you to throw my handful of rice with the rest, but believe that my heart will be with you all day.

It seems strange that this is the last letter I shall ever write to Letty Lavender, but Letty Ironside may like to hear from me later on. Once more, good-bye, my dear child. Fond wishes from your loving old Aunt

PRISCILLA.

LETTERS TO A BRIDE

I

AT HOME

YOUR letter, my dearest Letty, has interested me very much. It is so delightful to me to think that you are so happy in your new home, and that the sight of your pretty wedding presents, all arranged in their proper places, gives you constant thoughts of the many dear friends who sent them. I quite understand what you mean when you say that they only looked like a stall at a fancy fair when they were all set out at your wedding, but that they have become a real pleasure to you now that they are properly arranged, and in daily use, so that they are almost like company to you when you are alone. I am glad that the little writing-table looks nice in the boudoir, and so pleased that the first use you made of it was to sit down and write a little note to the old

aunt who sent it, and whom you do not forget, although she is far away. Home is a great deal to a woman, Letty, and say what one will, we have inherited the housewifely instincts of our many ancestresses, who made the care of their houses and households the only thought of their lives. Our homes are not the be-all and end-all of existence with us now, and yet they are very important, and the care of them is a sacred and precious thing. And the first home of the bride must always be full of happy memories—the first sweet days in the new home are precious to remember all through life—the time when the performance of the simplest little household duty made the husband think the girl-wife was a miracle of cleverness, when every meal eaten in common seemed like a sacrament of love. Dear Letty, I know full well what precious hours these are, and that the book of life seems like a vellum-bound psalter, almost too delicate to touch.

I am glad you have brought so many pretty souvenirs from abroad, making your home, as a bird builds its nest, with a twig from one place and a scrap of moss from another. And I *can quite* understand that you are happy to be

at home, and that you prefer the little flat near Victoria Street to all the fine places you stayed in abroad. I am not a great believer in the joys of the honeymoon. There is such a terrible newness about everything, from the life to the luggage, —even one's signature is different, and one tears up many a letter before one gets into the habit of signing the brand-new name. Then it is not an unmitigated joy to go about all day long in perfectly new clothes, and I think one sometimes longs for a chat with a woman-friend, however highly one may appreciate the company of one's husband. The home-coming is, after all, the happiest part to a woman, and she loves to beautify the place where she and he are to lead the happiest of all possible lives, without jar, or quarrel, or trouble, always together, and always loving, and just all the world to one another. I am glad that it is given to my Letty to know how happy life may be, for the memory of this will abide with her, even though many a dark hour may follow in its train.

I think it is very nice of you to have written to me so soon, now that you have so many new duties to claim your attention; but I can hardly believe

you are in earnest in asking for more letters of advice from your aged aunt. When you were a timid *débutante*, I could understand your being anxious for a few hints from an old woman of the world like myself, but, surely, dear Letty, now that you have acquired the status of a married woman, and are the proud possessor of a home of your own, you no longer feel the necessity of any advice from me? Most of the young married women I have known have been quite overflowing with the sense of their newly-acquired dignity, but my Letty was always wanting in self-confidence, and I well remember the little deprecating look which, when she was a child, used invariably to follow any tiny little joke she had made at anyone else's expense—the little appealing smile she gave, when she fancied she had gone too far. Seriously, dear Letty, I shall be only too happy to advise you on any little point on which you may feel doubtful. Difficulties are sure to come to the young house-keeper, and I quite understand that you would not like either Edward or his relations to think you were ever in doubt about anything; it is, after all, much better that when you are in want of *any little hint* you should write at once to me.

I must own that your first question amused me a good deal, and it only presents another illustration of what I have so often told you—that you are very much wanting in self-confidence. You ask me many questions about whom you are to call on first—Edward's friends or your own—apparently entirely unaware that a bride never calls on anyone who has not first called on her. So you have nothing to do but to sit at home and wait for people to come, or, better still, send out cards of invitation for certain days of the week, so that your visitors may be sure of finding you at home.

Wedding-cake and wedding-cards are not so often sent as formerly, and the "At Home" cards sent when the bride settles down seem to be the only announcement which is made to her friends. Cake is always sent after a Royal wedding, by the way, but the Royalties are very conservative in their fashions, and possibly a certain impetus may have been given to the revival of the custom by the third act of Mr Henry Arthur Jones's play, in which the hero, if you remember, takes this very indelicate method of informing his lady love of his unfaithfulness. I must not forget to thank

you for the handsome allowance of wedding-cake you sent me the other day. I made all my visitors taste it, and distributed many portions for girls to dream upon. It seemed so odd to hear myself saying "This is Letty's wedding-cake!"

To return to the subject of your first "At Home" day. I suppose you will have your cards printed in silver, as you sent no regular wedding-cards, and that you will have your new name printed in the centre, and your maiden name in a diagonal line at the left-hand upper corner, intersected by an arrow. The date of the "At Home" should be placed in the lower corner, opposite the address. You need not have such an elaborate card unless you like; your ordinary visiting-card will do as well if you prefer it; but the plan I have mentioned has the method of being explicit, as people who have missed the announcement of the wedding in the newspapers would not know that my sweet Letty Lavender had been transformed into Mrs Edward Ironside.

It is as well for you and Edward to look over your visiting list together before you send out the *cards*. *Marriage* is a very important step in social

life, and the visiting list is often materially altered by this event. A bachelor can know all kinds of people whom he would not care about presenting to his wife when he marries, and although you would never give up any of your friends without a just reason, it would be awkward to keep up with anyone for whom your husband has a particular dislike. Send cards to Edward's friends and relations (whether you are acquainted with them or not), and do not forget anyone who sent you a wedding present. It is the business of the lady of the house to receive, as you are doubtless aware, but Edward ought to make an effort to come home in good time on your first "At Home" day, so as to relieve you from the awkwardness of entertaining his people all alone, when you do not know them except by hearsay. Remember to shake hands with everyone who comes to your house, and also with everyone they bring, for this is your duty as a hostess. I can just imagine how you will feel when your first at home day arrives, and how you will arrange and re-arrange your pretty drawing-room, anxious that everything shall appear at its best. Try to imagine the room as it will be when it is full of people,

and do not have it too full of furniture or ornaments, and let the centre be quite clear, so as to offer no impediment to movement. A hostess ought not to tie herself to one seat, as she has to go about the room and talk to different visitors, but you will find it convenient to sit facing the door, whenever possible, so that you may be ready to greet the visitors directly they appear. Beg your parlour-maid to announce the names distinctly, nothing is more trying than to have to entertain a visitor whose name you have not caught. The method of announcing visitors is the same in every house, whether the door is opened by a powdered footman or a neat-handed Phyllis. The servant precedes the visitor to the drawing-room door, pausing at the door to learn the name. She then throws the door wide open, and enters, standing well inside the room, whilst she makes the announcement. The hostess comes forward a few steps to greet the visitor, and seats herself when she has shaken hands, expecting her visitor to sit down near her. She enters into conversation at once, without excitement, and in a pleasant, composed style. She should *not try to entertain her visitor by showing her*

books and pictures; conversation is the object of visiting, and is all that is required. You will find plenty to talk about at your first "At Home"—the pleasure of the new home, and your recent trip abroad. Do not put the wedding presents out together for display, as you did at your wedding. They must be put in their proper places in the house. You can draw the attention of the donor to the gift when it is possible, saying, "Does not your vase look well on that bracket?" or, "You see your pretty tea-set has been taken into use at once."

Offer tea to your visitor directly she arrives, saying to the servant, "Bring some tea, please." The servant first covers the tea-table with an ornamental cloth, and then brings in the tea things on a nice tray made of brass, silver, oak, or Japanese lacquer, as the case may be. The newest afternoon tea-cloths are made as much like pocket-handkerchiefs as possible. I had a very pretty one given me for a pattern the other day made of four large hem-stitched pocket-handkerchiefs, united with an *entre deux* of Valenciennes lace, and a frill of lace round the edge. A table-cloth made entirely of lace looking exceedingly

well, but the tea-tray and all the appointments should be of silver in this case. You will pour out the tea yourself, either sitting or standing by the table as you prefer. You will offer rolled bread-and-butter and cake, and also wedding-cake. A few slices can be cut up into small pieces, and placed on an old china plate. If you do not wish to pour out the tea yourself, you can have it handed round by the servants. In this case the teapot and hot-water kettle are not carried into the drawing-room; the cups of tea, already poured out, are brought in on a silver tray, with milk jug, cream jug, and sugar basin, and the servant hands the tray to each visitor in turn. She should bring in as many cups as there are visitors, and take the tray out, after handing the tea. A second servant then enters with another tray, filled with plates of bread-and-butter and cakes. But I expect you will prefer to pour out your own tea, as you will like to show off your pretty Queen Anne tea-service, your new tea-table, and also your new basket-work cake-stand, as gay with coloured ribbons as a Maypole.

If you expect a great many visitors, perhaps you would be wise to have the tea in the dining-room. *In this case* you are relieved of all responsibility.

The table is covered with a white damask cloth, and a servant stands behind it and pours out tea. Tea and coffee are served from large silver urns, the tea cups arranged in rows at one side of the table, the coffee-cups on the other. Plates of small fancy sandwiches, brown and white bread-and-butter, and every kind of cake should be placed on the table, and glass jugs full of claret-cup, or champagne-cup, and decanters of sherry, can be placed at one side of the buffet, or else on the sideboard, as you prefer, together with groups of glasses. Wear your tea-gown or a smart dress, just as you prefer, and place plenty of flowers about the rooms. If you have never felt important before, my dear Letty, you will feel important at your own "At Home," when you are the centre of attraction, the magnet that brings the people together, the person on whom everything depends. I hope your first "day" will be a thorough success! Write and tell me how your party goes off, and believe that you have the good wishes of your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

II

THE ETIQUETTE OF VISITING

I WAS very much amused at the account of your first "At Home," but am glad to think it went off so well on the whole. Entertaining is peculiarly fatiguing, and the first party given by a bride is likely to be doubly trying, as she has to talk to all kinds of people whom she is anxious to please, yet does not know in the least. I don't know why we take so much trouble about our husband's friends. They are not likely to be fond of us, whatever pains we take! I ought not to air my cynicism before you, however; certainly, if Edward's friends did not like you they would be very hard to please. You made me laugh with your description of your shy friend, Mr Lennox, who did nothing but call you by your maiden name, and then remained covered with blushes and confusion. I was also much amused about old Lady Marchmont (some ancient relative of Edward's whom you had never *met before*), and how she flew all round the room

in her endeavour to find you, passing by you where you stood, all ready to greet her, near the door. You must learn to assert yourself more, my dear Letty; it ought not to be possible for anyone to overlook you in your own house. I am delighted to hear that the flat was so much admired, and also that my country flowers took part in the decorations. I am glad they were not utterly spoilt by the journey, but deigned to open their eyes and look about them after they had recovered from their fatigue. It is quite true what you say—that there is no privacy whatever in a flat! People expect to be shown all over the premises in a way they would never dream of in a house, and the kitchen has to be got ready on an “At Home” day quite as much as the drawing-room itself. Visitors sometimes make unexpected discoveries in flats. You remember Miss Van Dollar’s absurd story about the man who went to pay a call in a flat in Paris, and who opened the wrong door when he took leave, and instead of bowing himself out sat down in a cupboard, and covered himself with flour? Nothing quite so tragic as that seems to have happened at your “At Home,” although one or two visitors walked right

into the kitchen when they were endeavouring to find the hall-door. And now the majority of the visits have been paid, and the great business of calling begins. All the visiting virtually falls on the mistress of the house, though I daresay Edward would manage to go round a little with you if you asked him, more particularly when you are going to see his friends. Still, the visiting is really your particular business, and it is better for you to take it up methodically. You must not allow too long a time to elapse between visits, or you will find yourself left out of invitations. A call is a kind compliment, and you should be careful to return it as soon as possible; and always call on the "At Home" day when you can, as it is not fair to encroach on a person's leisure when she has already set aside a day for the purpose of receiving. In my young days it was only very grand ladies who had special days for reception, but now every woman has her "day," and the difficulty lies in remembering when it comes. The visiting-book is the clue to the labyrinth, my dear Letty, and I would advise you to start one at once. Very ornate books are sold at *the stationers* for the purpose, but a penny

memorandum book will answer just as well, with a line ruled down the centre of each page. You can arrange the four divisions as follows: Name, address, day, remarks—the latter being filled in in pencil, with the date of the calls made or returned. My own book is cut out at the edge, with the name of the day on each leaf. The four compartments are headed as follows: Name, address, at home, remarks. The last-named column would be truly comic if we were to fill it up with our genuine sentiments, such as "Kept half-an-hour on the doorstep before the idiotic page-boy opened the door!" or "Bad tea! I will never go there again!" I remember a country vicar once telling me that his wife had an unfailing test for the character of a new acquaintance, and that was her cake! The London hostess, whose connection with her own entertainment goes no further than sending an order to some great confectioner for all his newest things, can scarcely appreciate the importance of the cake in a country village, where people do their own baking, and every hostess has her own recipe. In the eyes of the lady referred to, the cake was a crucial test. She attended

the local tea fights and card parties, and then she would take her husband's arm and jog steadily home. Then there would be a dead silence, and a reverie, which would be generally broken by the following remark: "Well, I don't think much of her cake!" This stinging criticism led the vicar to believe that his wife considered that the housekeeping was bad, and the hostess not a person to be cultivated. If, however, she said: "Well, I don't think that cake was bad," this grudging admission allowed the vicar to surmise that the new-comer was an acquisition to the neighbourhood.

However, we have not got to do with country villages, with their homely ways, but with critical London, where life is a burden, and everyone has to be more or less up-to-date. And here am I gossiping and telling old tales (after the manner of ancient ladies), when I ought to be answering the many questions you asked me in your last letter with regard to your round of visits. It certainly is very difficult to remember everybody's day, but it is worth taking trouble about, since it is a pleasure to the hostess to think you *have remembered* it. You would find it a great

help to put up all the cards on a rack; you know the kind of thing I mean. You could make one by covering a board with plush, and nailing narrow ribbons across it from each side. Hang up your rack in your dining-room or dressing-room, and then you can give it a glance in the morning, and see who is at home that day. And now I will imagine my dear Letty setting off on her long round of calls, feeling a little nervous in her new character of married woman. (It is very surprising at first when servants call you ma'am instead of miss, and when old single ladies draw back to give you precedence!) You put on your prettiest bonnet, my dear Letty (for everyone expects to see a bride well-dressed), and taking your little card-case in your hand, set forth to pay your calls. Arrived at the door; you ask: "Is Mrs Dash at home?" and if the answer is in the negative you leave one of your own cards and two of Edward's for Mr and Mrs Dash. Supposing Mrs Dash were a widow, you would leave one of Edward's cards and one of your own; if you were paying a visit to a young single lady you would only leave your own card. Supposing you were calling on a lady who had daughters, you could leave an extra card

for them (one of yours, you understand, not one of Edward's—you never leave a gentleman's card on an unmarried lady, except she is quite old), or else you can leave only one, turning up the corner of it to show that you include all the family in the call. I notice that you ask me in your letter what are the different meanings of turning up the corner of a card. The principal use of the custom is to show that you include the whole family in your call, but it also implies that you have left the card yourself, and not sent it by a servant, for no one would take such a liberty with a card except the owner. You must not turn up the corner of Edward's card, by the way; a gentleman's card is never turned up at the corner, for fear there might be any unmarried ladies at the house at which it was left. A little while since it was not considered correct to leave cards when you had seen the hostess; but the fashion of having the "At Home" day on the card has altered all that, and you generally pop your card down on the hall table as you are going out, if it is a first visit, so that the lady may know when to return your call.

Supposing the lady of the house is at home, you *enter the house* without further remark. Leave

your umbrella in the hall; it is not correct to take it into the drawing-room. A sunshade is admissible, but in any case I think you will prefer to have your hands quite free. If you are wearing a heavy wrap you can say to the servant: "I will leave my cloak." He will take it from you, and put it on one side, and will help you to put it on when you are leaving.

The servant precedes you to the drawing-room door, where he pauses a moment to ask your name. (Let us hope he goes quietly—how one hates a house where the servant rushes upstairs and announces you some time before you appear!) You should reply: "Mrs Ironside"—without any additional word—only take care you don't say "Miss Lavender!" If the mistress of the house is not in the drawing-room when you arrive, seat yourself quietly till she comes. But if you call on the "At Home" day she will probably be there—the sun of her social circle, diffusing sweetness and light all round. Sit down as soon as you have shaken hands, and enter into conversation with your hostess. There should be no fussiness of demeanour, either on the part of hostess or guest; repose of manner is the basis of all comfort in

social intercourse. A *tête-à-tête* between two people but slightly acquainted is not an easy thing, it requires a good deal of tact on both sides. Never carry your troubles into society, and be careful not to talk about domestic matters to slight acquaintances, such as your trials with your servants. Topics of this kind should be reserved for intimate friends. It seems to me unspeakably vulgar to pay a call on an equal, and occupy the time with discoursing on the peculiarities of one's inferiors. I would not talk about Mary or James for all the world—except they did something really dramatic and interesting such as committing suicide or making off with all the family plate.

If other callers are introduced to you, you should merely bow, except you were presented to some old or important lady, when you would naturally rise to shake hands. If some smart young lady were presented to you, you would find a bow sufficient, but supposing old Lady Pierpoint, your husband's god-mother, came across the room and said: "I must shake hands with Edward's wife"—why, then, dearest Letty, she would think you a very ungracious girl if you sat still! Your behaviour *towards the visitor* when leaving depends on the

amount of conversation you have had with her during the visit. If you have had a good deal of talk you might shake hands, but on ordinary occasions a bow is sufficient. Do not rise when other visitors take leave. That is the part of the hostess. Twenty minutes is the regulation time for a first call, half an hour would be long enough in any case. When leaving, shake hands pleasantly with the hostess, and any friends who are near. If a gentleman with whom you are unacquainted opens the drawing-room door for you, thank him and bow, but do not shake hands.

I must finish this long letter, dearest Letty. I hope I have told you everything you want to know.—Your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

III

THE MANAGEMENT OF SERVANTS

I HAVE selected the title of this letter, my dear Letty, with a considerable amount of care; I am going to write about the management of servants, because I am possessed with a decided fear that if you are not very careful your servants may manage *you*! Servants are only too glad, as a rule, to engage themselves to a newly-married couple. They know that all the appointments will be new and nice, and the living good and abundant, and they often count on the ignorance of the young bride, and think that she will not notice their various peccadilloes. Wastefulness and imposition often go unnoticed, owing to the ignorance of the mistress as to the amount of time that provisions ought to last, and elderly servants will sometimes try to prejudice the husband against his young wife, insinuating that her orders are too silly to be carried *out*. Edward's old housekeeper would have been

just such a woman as this, Letty—I could see it in her eye—and I am thankful you took my advice and utterly refused to have anything to do with her. The valuable experience which Edward thought would have been so helpful to you would have been only a means of making you unhappy. Buy your own experience, dear Letty, as all of us have to do, and do not take into your service a woman who would probably end by being mistress of the entire establishment.

I speak somewhat feelingly on this subject, for I suffered much from an old servant myself when I was first married. She had been in your uncle's service before our marriage, and had known him and his sisters when they were all in short frocks; she was honest and conscientious to a degree, but she made my life thoroughly unhappy all the same. How well I remember the contemptuous expression that woman used to assume when I gave my orders! Any suggestion of mine was looked on as entirely futile, and my housekeeper would remark that she ought to know what Sir Marmaduke would like by now, considering that she had known him from a boy. She did not

exactly dislike me, I think, but she would have chopped me up small and served me up on toast without a murmur if my husband had said he would have liked me for his breakfast! The day came at last, my dear Letty, when my household treasure gave me warning, thinking that she would be promptly asked to stay, and that I should be simply crushed to the earth. I most joyfully accepted the notice, and your uncle, coming suddenly into the room a few minutes after, found me jumping about like a madwoman. "Mrs Termagant's going! Mrs Termagant's going!" I cried, literally dancing for joy. He looked at me with his face full of mild surprise. "I thought she was such a comfort to you," he said. All this happened long years ago, dear Letty, and you will laugh to think of your dignified aunt in the days when she was afraid to speak her mind. The memory of it is still with me, however, and it makes me feel for you, dear child, in all your new household troubles.

I should think the cook you have chosen might suit you very well. It is as well she is not too young, as her experience may really be useful to *you*. And the housemaids seem to be pleasant,

willing girls, and I hope you will be able to keep them up to their work. It is a pity that you have had so little training in domestic matters; girls who have been allowed to assist in the house-keeping at home find it easier to take up the reins. It is impossible to give orders properly when you know so little about the way in which things should be done.

I am glad to think that Edward does not know about your doubts and fears—that he thinks you a miracle of cleverness, and that everything you do is right. His faith in you ought to give you more confidence, and you must try to live up to his ideal. Housekeeping demands unremitting attention; you must give your orders distinctly, and see that they are carried out as well. Servants are quick to notice if you let anything pass, and an omission is apt to become chronic if it is not noticed at once. I would not have you over-strict with your servants, of course; you must know when to speak and when to leave it alone. No one is perfect, and it is sometimes well to be a little blind, especially when the fault occurs on an occasion when a servant is not well or over-tired, or when the household has been

thrown a little out of gear by some unexpected cause. I know I need not tell you that it is right always to speak gently to servants; I am sure you feel, as I do, that politeness is more necessary towards our inferiors than towards any other class. They cannot resent it if we lose our tempers and are wanting in self-control; they cannot answer us back. So they have a great claim upon us for our kindness, and when we remember that their happiness is entirely in our hands, that we are responsible for their lives, and that they can have no pleasure or recreation except we give it them — when we remember how entirely they depend on us, I think no one who is worthy of the lovely old title of gentlewoman will offer them anything but courtesy and kindness.

One point I would impress upon you is not to talk to them too much, for if they once become too familiar you will not get respect from them again. Do not treat them to your varying moods; our friends may see our moods, but not our servants. We must not be too confiding to them one day and try to make it up by subsequent haughtiness. An even demeanour must be the *aim* of everyone who aspires to rule, and you

must try to distribute the measure of praise and blame which makes the servant give you the best work of which she is capable. Never blame a servant before a third person. It is bad manners, in the first place, and rude to the friend, as well as to the servant, for you have no right to drag your acquaintances into your domestic quarrels, and a reproach is always doubly hard to bear if it is uttered in the presence of a stranger. Tell your servant of her fault later on, and if you say to her: "I did not mention this at the time, Mary, because Mrs So-and-So was here," you will find that she will appreciate your delicacy of feeling.

One failing is peculiar to most servants, my dear Letty—they are seldom anxious to save the pockets of their employers. It may be that your limited income seems unlimited wealth to them, by comparison with the narrow mode of life in which they have been brought up—certain it is that very few of them care to save your money, and that they would always rather put money into the pockets of your tradespeople than into your own. They tell you that they have broken some valuable ornament with unmistakable joy

on their countenances—it may be that their lives are so quiet that they enjoy the importance of being the bearers of ill news—and they always seem rather pleased than not when you are put to unnecessary expense. On account of these peculiarities, my dear Letty, it is not wise to allow them to order the provisions. They are always on the side of the tradespeople, and would rather that your bills were large, and that you bought any particular thing just when it happened to be dearest. So I would advise you to keep the reins in your own hands and, whether you deal at shops or stores, do the ordering as much as possible yourself.

When engaging a servant you should always mention any peculiar service you expect of them, such as early rising, on account of the master of the house going to the City, and you should tell them if you entertain a great deal, so that they do not accept the situation in ignorance of the duties which will be expected of them. It is usual to ask them their age. I always feel myself rather rude when I do this. I am glad the custom does not obtain in our own class. Supposing a *duchess* called on me, and suddenly asked me

whether I was fifty-five or fifty-six last birthday! She could find out if she chose to look it up in the book, of course, but I shouldn't care to discuss it in my drawing-room, all the same. I think you will be able to get a good plain cook for about £20 a year, an upper-housemaid for £18, and an under-housemaid for £12. A page-boy does not get much wages—£12 and two suits of livery would be sufficient, but don't imagine he is a cheap functionary; he "takes it out," so to speak, in living and breakages. A lady's-maid is supposed not to get less than £20 a year, but you might get a young beginner for £15. You would find it a good plan to give your servants a written list of the duties which are expected of them, including the days on which the different rooms have to be turned out. I am so glad you are going to have a maid. I assure you, dear Letty, that a good lady's-maid is an economy and a help to you in a hundred ways. You will find your clothes wear twice as long, and you won't go on wearing the same gown till it leaves you (a fault to which all women are addicted—there is always a favourite gown which we want to take into continual wear).

Well, a lady's-maid won't let you do that, as she loves to see you go out different, and she is sure to take care you wear all your gowns in turn. It is the lady's-maid's place to bring up your hot water in the morning, also that early cup of tea against which doctors declaim in vain. She must assist you whilst you dress, and keep your wardrobe in repair, and do a certain amount of dressmaking and millinery. I would not give her too much dressmaking to do, if I were you. I make my own maid mend and "do up" my clothes, but I don't expect her to make my new dresses. Dressmaking demands concentration, and I don't see how anyone can make dresses well when they are liable to be called off every minute. Your maid is supposed to sit up for you when you go out in the evening, so that she may put away all your things when you come home. I am an old woman now, Letty, and could not dispense with services of this kind, but when I was young there was one thing I was very decided about—I would never let my maid sit up for me if I went out to a ball. I assure you, Letty, all my pleasure would have been *spoilt* if I had thought that my poor Parker

was sitting up for me, sick with fatigue, after her long day's work.

Good-bye for the present, dearest Letty. Mind you write again if there is anything I have left out.—Always your loving Aunt PRISCILLA.

IV

WAITING AT TABLE

THE way to perfection lies through a series of disgusts, and much must be endured by the hardy housekeeper who sets to work to instruct an untrained servant how to wait at table. She has to be always on the watch, checking the growth of bad habits, continually telling her pupil what to do and what to avoid. She will have to mention the same thing over and over again, until the good habit has become crystallised, and to endure the most fearful clashing of glass and clanging of china until she has got her servant to understand how needful is quiet to the enjoyment of a meal. And she must never speak hastily, for fear she might give a wrong direction, and make matters ten times worse by confusing the person she is *endeavouring* to instruct.

My father was rather severe with servants, and my mother and I used to be simply wretched whenever a new footman came. My father had the greatest detestation of noise, and he never allowed any fault to pass unnoticed; and I used to think I would rather sit by the roadside with a crust, than have to listen to the awful remarks that were made to the unfortunate James. Do you remember Markham—that velvet-footed man who grew grey in our service? I can recollect him when he first came, the most awkward boy it has ever been my bad fortune to come across. Well, Markham's wonderful manners were really the result of my father's many scoldings, and I have seen the poor boy so nervous that he would amble away from the table and set to the chairs as if he were dancing a quadrille. He used to get so nervous that he would rattle the spoons as if they were castanets; my father frightened him so that I used to think his teeth would begin to chatter as well as the silver.

I would never turn my own dinner-table into what I might call an impolite seminary, where servants were publicly reproved; yet, of course,

they must be told of their faults, and you are apt to forget them, if you don't mention them at the time. Everyone judges the management of the house by the way in which the servants wait at table, so you cannot let them go on in their faults, as people would think you were ignorant. Good waiting is also an important factor in the comfort of a family, and the simplest meal nicely served is more enjoyable than a rich banquet served by noisy servants. So it is essential that you should train your domestics, but I would advise you to confine your spoken observations to your lonely lunch, and not to turn the dinner hour into a misery for all concerned. A reproof is so much easier to bear when no listeners are present, and you can easily mention any little fault at lunch which you had noticed at dinner the night before.

You ask me to give you all the hints I can as to the method of waiting to be observed at the different meals. You say that you have an instinctive feeling that your parlour-maid is all wrong, yet you have not sufficient knowledge to correct her mistakes. The duties of housekeeping have never been yours before, and when you

were at Lady Highflyte's you used always to be wrapped up in conversation when you were at table, the well-trained servants moving noiselessly about you like people in a dream. You never had any occasion to notice how anything was done, and you find it very difficult to set your own servants right now that all the cares of life seem to have so suddenly descended on your shoulders. I will gladly describe to you the correct mode of service with regard to the different meals, and do not forget to tell me if I have left out anything you particularly want to know.

I suppose I need scarcely remind you at starting that you must strongly impress upon your parlour-maid the necessity of handing the dishes at the left-hand side, and the wine at the right. Sherry and claret should be decanted before being brought to table, but not sparkling wines. If you have draught ale, the servant should offer a waiter for the tumbler, pouring the ale out of a jug; bottled ale should be opened at the sideboard, and the glass should be handed on a waiter. There is a great art in laying a cloth, a table looks so much more inviting when

all the spoons and forks are arranged with almost mathematical accuracy; the cloth should be spread over a thick woollen table-cover, or else it will look poor and thin. Dinner mats are not fashionable, neither are they required for utilitarian purposes, as the baize or woollen table-cover is sufficient protection for the table. The cruet-stand should not be put upon the table, its proper place is the sideboard. Serviettes should be folded very simply for a family dinner; anything elaborate is apt to look vulgar, and only suggests a restaurant.

Dinner *à la Russe* is at once the most fashionable and the most agreeable style, but this cannot be carried out when the waiting has to be done by one servant, so I will only describe the simple style of waiting you would require for a family dinner. The cover consists of two large knives and forks, a fish knife and fork, and a tablespoon for soup. The serviette, with the roll inside it, is placed in the centre of the cover, the glasses on the right-hand side. Dessert spoons and small forks are not placed on the table until they are required, and decanters of

wine should be left on the sideboard until dessert. The sideboard should be covered with a pretty sideboard cloth, with rows of extra knives and forks, etc., in case they are required. Everything that is needed for the cheese course and also for dessert should be arranged on the dinner waggon, and much time in waiting is saved by having all these things ready to hand.

You can exercise your taste with regard to table decorations, and try to get as much variety as possible, as it lends so much enchantment to a meal. Ferns in white china ornaments are nice for every-day use (ferns never look so well as they do in white china). Marguerites and grasses are also extremely enduring, and they always look pretty and simple. A yard of brocade (with the ends finished off with fringe), or even a length of Liberty muslin (green or yellow) makes a capital table - centre when arranged so as to form a large bow; little vases of flowers in the centre and at the sides complete this pretty effect. Do not have a high table-centre for every-day use, it impedes conversation, and Edward will prefer to see his

pretty Letty in her muslin gown to the loveliest floral trophy in the world.

Your parlour-maid should place the soup tureen and soup plates on the table before announcing dinner (except there are to be oysters or *hors d'œuvres* at the commencement). She closes the door after you have both entered the room, and then stands at the left-hand side of the person who helps the soup (either Edward or yourself, as you prefer).

It is Edward's place to serve the fish, and the parlour-maid brings you the serve of fish and the sauce-boat in either hand, by way of saving time. If there is an *entrée* she will hand it to each in turn, and if champagne is offered, this will be the time it makes its appearance.

The joint is now brought in and placed before Edward, and the servant hands the plates as before. The vegetables are placed on the butler's tray, and the servant hands them to each in turn, afterwards handing the cruets on a small tray. I am glad that Edward is such a good carver, and that he gives everyone what they like without talking about it. A carver always *takes away* my appetite if he says, "Now is this

too underdone? It is only the gravy in it, and it's good for you!"

It is the lady's business to dispense the sweets, but Edward should help the cheese, except it is cut up into small pieces and handed round on a tripartite dish, in company with biscuits and butter. Dry toast is often offered with cheese, and it may be placed in a small china toast-rack on the table.

Your neat-handed Phyllis now clears the table of plates, glasses, salt-cellars, and such-like, and brushes off the crumbs with a crumb-brush on to a silver waiter, and brings in your simple dessert. A dessert plate and finger bowl are placed before each person, and two glasses, one for sherry and one for claret, at the right-hand side of the plate. The servant arranges the dishes of fruit on the table, and leaves the room. She would not hand the dishes, as at a dinner party.

I have now given you the etiquette for the simplest of home dinners; in another letter I will tell you how to manage when you want to give a nice little dinner party *à la Russe*.

You will see that a good deal of thought is required in order to ensure the success of the

simplest of meals, but if Edward is pleased with his little *tête-à-tête* dinners, you will not think your trouble has been thrown away.

I hope you are not tired of reading these dry details, my dear Letty.—Believe me, your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

V

ON ENTERTAINING

I CAN well understand, my dear Letty, how trying it must be to you to find yourself suddenly in the position of hostess—the important person who is responsible for all, the pivot on which everything turns. It is different for girls who have always had to help their mother to entertain, and have mastered the whole alphabet of the relations between hostess and guest whilst they were still in their teens. You should have gone through the different phases of cadet and aide-de-camp before you attained your promotion, so to speak, but it has never happened to you before to have to take a very prominent part in life. The early death of your mother was a sad misfortune for you, and when you went to stay with Lady Highflyte you naturally had to efface yourself a good deal. And now all the responsibilities of life seem to have fallen on your shoulders in a heap, and you find yourself in

the wretched position of the person who must be "mistress of herself, though china fall!" Terrible definition of the duties of the hostess! It is not so easy to go on smiling, whatever occurs, just because you happen to be in your own house. It must be done—but it is not so easy as it sounds—only those who have experienced it know how trying it can be. There is something peculiarly annoying about anything going wrong in your own house—it is not easy to emulate Iago and "smile and smile" during the falling of the symbolic china, as though nothing had occurred. And china always *does* fall around the hostess, more or less—in some form or other she gets vexations. I often think there is some mischievous spirit who looks after parties, the opposite of the kindly cherub who looks after poor Jack. This spirit must have a special dislike to the hostess, and sends down all sorts of accidents on her devoted head. Such dreadful things happen at parties, they seem to point to a supernatural agent of an unkindly turn. Chimneys smoke, tradesmen forget to send home the things, servants get ill or insubordinate, or *deadly* enemies arrive in your drawing-room

simultaneously. Many of these accidents cannot be guarded against, but some of them can be prevented by the exercise of forethought — a quality so valuable that I am inclined to take the pronunciation adopted by a foreign friend and dignify it by the title of five-thought.

Before you give any kind of party you should always think of everything that might possibly go wrong, and try to provide against it. Order everything you want in good time, and do not pay for it beforehand, as that is apt to have a fatal effect on the memory of the tradesman. Think of your rooms as they will be when they are full of people, and clear away any piece of furniture which is likely to impede circulation. I have known a whole party spoilt because the mistress of the house insisted on leaving a huge ottoman in the centre of her drawing-room—it formed an impassable barrier between the two sides of the room, and those who wished to pass across to their friends could not. You should also remove any ornaments which are likely to be overturned in a crowd, and even take the doors off their hinges if there is likely to be anything like a crush. When you are

arranging the dining-room, see that you place the buffet near a door where the servants can get out easily when they have to take away the cups that have been used or bring in fresh tea, etc. Never mind if this is not the prettiest place for the table. Nothing is so disagreeable as to have servants trying to squeeze their way through a crowd with their hands full of things, and the waiting is often considerably impeded through this cause. If you have a fear it is likely to be realised. Do not grudge any trouble which you take beforehand. Of course you can only learn by experience, but it is very painful to see everything going wrong at a party through some simple cause, and to have to say to yourself: "If I had only thought of that before!"

I hope you will not mind this little sermon on the advantages of forethought, for it will save you many vexations if you can apply it. The unexpected accidents can only be overcome by a gay spirit, coupled with presence of mind. You may take it for granted that something will go wrong; and make up your mind not to worry if it does. The best hostess is she who goes on all the same whatever happens, who-

ever comes or whoever stays away, who can throw herself into the breach when there is any lapse in the conversation, and efface herself for the moment when all is going well.

It seems to me that there are only two kinds of hostesses—those who don't introduce at all, and those who introduce too much. We all know the hostess who introduces too much—who “shoos” her guests about as if they were chickens, and conducts her receptions as if she were a *gendarme*. She seems to sniff conspiracy wherever two or three are gathered together, and bears down upon them at once with whatever is the society equivalent for “*Circulez!*” She hunts her poor visitors from room to room; she would like to call them to order with a hand-bell. She “shoos” them into one room to hear somebody recite, and out of it again to hear someone else play. She will come and say “Sh-sh” to you on the landing if you speak above your breath whilst somebody is playing. She stops a happy couple on their way down to tea, saying; “You are not going down just as Mr So-and-So is going to sing?” No flirtations in corners or cosy chats are ever allowed in her

establishment. Jack is not permitted to remain peacefully with Jill; he will be dragged away by the hair of his head and introduced to someone at the opposite side of the room. You may be having ever such an interesting conversation with a man, and, hey presto! he is whisked off like a conjuring trick, and someone else put in his place. The hostess flies into the midst of a friendly group as though she were a bomb-shell, and scatters its component parts to the furthest corners of the room. As for what she calls a "nice man," she regards him as Tilly Slowboy did the baby — something to be handed round the room as though it were a species of refreshment. Many of the guests try to hide themselves in odd corners, but they are soon routed out of their hiding-places, and the chicken-hunt commences again.

The hostess who doesn't introduce is also somewhat trying, but in a different kind of way. She stands at the top of the staircase with a perfectly expressionless face, well pleased with herself and her toilet, and holding her fan or bouquet in the very latest style. She bestows the fashionable *high-hand* shake on each new-comer, and gives him

a smile which seems to be regulated by machinery. She makes no attempt towards the entertainment of her guests; she seems to think it is sufficient honour for them to be in her house, and to see her hideous wall decorations and her expensive toilette. The guest may wander dismally through the gilded halls, or subside into a corner and glower at his fellow-men. If he does not happen to find acquaintances he will have a wretched time, and all because he is in the house of a hostess who will not take any trouble about her friends. I went to the house of just such a woman as I have described the last time I was in town. There were plenty of people who could have entertained the guests—the mother, two pretty daughters, and the host. My dear, they all stood round the door in a group, the whole evening, and just shook hands with everyone when they first came in. The ladies' dresses made a nice harmony of colour—they were all made of satin, one was pink, one mauve, and one pale blue—but they did not take the slightest pains to make the evening go. Now, if the daughters of the hostess had circulated amongst the guests they might have been extremely useful. It was one of those dreadful parties which people give or

year and ask all their friends to—not a nice party at which people belong to the same set, so that introductions are scarcely necessary. It was a dismal evening for all the unlucky guests, but the family group behind the doorway seemed perfectly pleased all the time. You cannot praise the hostess who is purely decorative; her parties are things to avoid. You cannot make a party go well without some trouble—it is a good hard afternoon's work—or evening's as the case may be. But if all goes well, how rewarded you feel! The consciousness that you have given your friends pleasure—that everyone has been happy—that you have not had one single guest who could consider himself neglected or unprized. All this cannot be done without trouble, but it amply repays you in the end. Remember that the popular guest needs little looking after; he is sure to have a good time. Your business is more with the stranger who is new to the set, or with the person who is shy or unattractive. If there is anyone who is not generally welcome you must pay him all the personal attention you can spare. You must introduce plenty of people to a celebrity, first asking the permission of the *latter*, of course. But I think your natural tact

and amiability will come to your aid, my dear Letty, and that the affection which so many people feel for you will prove a powerful factor in the success of your "At Homes." Have you never noticed how much better a party always goes when a hostess is personally popular? Although the guests may only speak to her for a moment they are all pleased with her, and wish her well, and they are bound together by the common desire that the party may be a thorough success. Her magnetism pervades the entire gathering, and the atmosphere is peaceful and serene. Mr Grossmith has said that the society world contains only two classes—the people who will entertain and can't, and those who can't entertain but will. I hope you will not be numbered with either of these sections, dearest Letty, but will be known as the hostess who can entertain, and does it with the most absolute success. A longer letter next time. —Ever your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

VI

THE FIRST DINNER PARTY

AND so you are going to give your first dinner party, dearest Letty! The very first dinner party in the pretty new flat; don't you feel inches taller when you think of it? You will be able to use all your lovely wedding presents at last—the table-centre the Levisons embroidered for you, the silver sweet-dishes, the Salviati dessert service—everything that you have will come into use, and I am sure your dinner-table will look charming. And yet you are not happy, dearest Letty! You are too overwhelmed with your responsibilities to feel very much pleasure in the idea of being a hostess. I will not scold you for your nervousness on this occasion; it is a feeling I can perfectly sympathise with. The hostess at a tea-party or a dance has her anxieties, but she can give a hint to her servants now and again; but *the woman* who sits at the head of her own

dinner-table is an absolute fixture, she cannot stir from her place, whatever goes wrong. She sees mistakes being made, but she cannot speak, and I believe less suffering has been endured in the pillory than in the hostess's chair.

You seem very young, little Letty, to have all the responsibilities of the mistress of the house. It seems only the other day that you were going out to your first dinner-party, and awfully anxious as to who should take you down. And now you have got everything to arrange, including settling who is to take everybody in; and as for precedence, that way madness lies, it is the most tiresome thing to decide about at times. You had better buy a peerage, you will find it invaluable; it is impossible to remember all the dates of creation, etc., without one. Make out a list of your guests, and make a little plan of the table, and settle beforehand how they must all be placed. See that you do not place husbands and wives together, or, indeed, any members of the same family, as they are apt to spoil one another's enjoyment. What a nice dinner-party one might give, my dear Letty, if one had not to invite everyone in couples, just as the animals went into

the Ark! What a brilliant success it would be if one dared invite Teddy O'Brien without the painfully accurate wife who will correct all his best stories—and wouldn't Mrs Teddy be happy if she were invited on another evening without her husband, and given permission to bring a "nice boy"! Very few married couples are at their best in one another's society, though I am happy enough to know one or two who set one another off, and are decided exceptions to the rule.

Your most distinguished lady guest, dearest Letty, will be Lady Highflyte, so it will be proper for Edward to take her in to dinner. His aunt, Lady Lyndon, is the only person who might contest her precedence, but she will willingly take the second place, on account of being a relation of the family. Edward's widowed sister, Leila Meredith, is equal in rank to your cousin Marcia, but you should let the latter go first, as it is usual to give the wife's relations precedence before those of the husband's. As for Harry Marsden, it would have been very nice to have let him take Mrs Meredith down, as you fancy he is rather smitten with her, but I am afraid it must not *be my dear*—you will have to give him to the

eldest Highflyte girl; but you might manage to put Mrs Meredith on his other side.

About going in to dinner: Edward leads the way, as you know, with the most distinguished lady present, and you go last with the most distinguished gentleman—Lord Castermaine (I am sorry he is so deaf). The other guests follow, according to their proper order of precedence—married ladies preceding single ones (except the latter happen to be Ladies in their own right). When you reach the dining-room every lady seats herself at the right hand of the gentleman who has escorted her, which results in the curious fact that you place the most distinguished gentleman at your left hand, not your right, as you might have supposed.

I see you ask me whether it is your place or Edward's to tell the gentlemen what lady they are to take in to dinner. It is immaterial which of you do this, but I think in your place I should leave it to Edward. But if the couples are not sure of the order in which they should proceed, it is your place to indicate to each gentleman when it is his turn to join the procession. He will then offer his arm to the

lady to whom Edward has already introduced him.

If the ladies happen to be in the majority, you must give the gentlemen to the ladies who are highest in rank, the other ladies following by themselves; if there should be one gentleman too little, it would be proper for you to go in to dinner alone, walking behind your guests. If, on the other hand, there happened to be two or three extra gentlemen they would follow you in to the dining-room. I hope that the number will be equally balanced at your dinner party, so that none of these awkward arrangements will be necessary; I only mention all this for fear there might be any *contretemps*, only remember that whatever happens you must never allow a gentleman to take in two ladies. It would be the very height of vulgarity and bad style.

The host is a very important person at a dinner party, and whatever you do, don't forget to put Edward's name in the invitations. If you send formal invitations, it is Mr and Mrs Edward Ironside who request the pleasure of the company of the guests; if you write an informal *note* remember to say "we" instead of "I."

I see you ask my advice about the decoration of the table. I should strongly advise you to keep to one tone of colour. Your pink table-centre seems to suggest roses, either placed in your Salviati vases or in your old china bowl. Pink tulips are lovely before they are open, but sometimes the heat of the dining-room will develop them too rapidly, and they "give themselves away" in the most alarming style. If you decide on the old lace centre-piece, I advise you to mount it on yellow velvet. In this case decorate with white and yellow flowers, and use your golden Salviati wine-glasses, etc. I would not have menus, except it is going to be a very elaborate dinner, but put name cards at every place.

Forethought constitutes the chief element in the success of a dinner party, my dear Letty, as well as that of every other kind of entertainment. Instruct your servants most carefully beforehand as to the way in which they are to wait, and examine the table yourself before anyone arrives, so that you may be sure that nothing is forgotten. The cover for each person consists of two large dinner knives and forks, and a fish

knife and fork; a tablespoon for soup is placed on the right-hand side. The serviette, with the roll inside, is placed in the centre, and glasses for sherry, hock, claret, and champagne are placed at the right-hand side of the cover. Tumblers are not placed on the table; a guest would ask the servant for one if he required it. Small salt-cellars must be placed all down the table, one to each couple, and menu cards in the same ratio (supposing you prefer to have them). A little fancy is allowable in the choice of menus and name cards, as they help to promote conversation. Menu cards in the shape of swans (made of cardboard) are very pretty, and I rather like the name cards which look like an Osborne biscuit printed with the words "Welcome Guest" instead of the manufacturer's name. Autograph menus are another new idea—a space being left for the names at the back, and each guest inscribing his (or her) name at the end of the dinner, so that the cards can be taken away as a souvenir. There is very little on the table except flowers when the dinner is *à la Russe*, but a good deal is placed upon the sideboard, where there are many rows of knives and forks

ready for use. All the dishes will be served from the side-table, so the soup ladle, carving knife, etc., will be placed there instead of on the dinner-table. Sherry and claret are placed upon the sideboard, and do not forget the pretty sideboard cloth of oatmeal cloth or embroidered linen, exactly fitting the sideboard and not falling over as though it were trying to emulate the example of the table-cloth. The same remark applies to the side-table on which the joints are carved; the cloth should fit, but not fall over the sides. The dessert is generally placed on the sideboard until the psychological moment arrives, the cheese course is all ready on the dinner waggon. It takes the servants a good deal of time to arrange all these things, but the waiting is greatly facilitated by having everything ready to hand. We will now imagine that you have all entered the dining-room, Edward standing in his place at the bottom of the table until everyone is seated. The two servants in attendance hand the dishes simultaneously to the ladies seated on Edward's right and left-hand side, and from thence to each person along that side. The butler helps the soup at the side-table and the foot-

man hands it round. If two soups are given he takes a plate in each hand, and gives the guests their choice. If oysters are given three or four are placed on each plate, and brown bread and butter is offered. Sherry is offered after soup, champagne when the first *entrée* has been handed. A good servant will facilitate the process of serving by placing a nice help in the spoon before offering the dish; he will also hold the dish at a convenient height, well within reach of the guest's hand. Two *entrées*, a joint and either poultry or game, would be sufficient for the kind of dinner you propose to give, followed by a couple of nice sweets and some savouries, cheese and cheese straws, and dessert. If you think of having ice, it should be given before dessert. A dessert plate with a finger glass on a lace doyley is offered to each person, the ice plate underneath the finger glass, and a gold or silver dessert knife and fork, and a spoon for the ice. Liqueurs are offered next (two kinds, as different as possible, such as Benedictine and Kummel), the ice plates are removed when finished with, and the dessert is handed round. Claret and sherry are

offered during dessert, the wine being left in front of the host before the servants leave the room.

I hope that all the waiting will be done exactly as I have described it, that everything will go smoothly, that the cook will send up everything in its proper order, and that the sauces and vegetables will not loiter by the way. All this will be the result of your forethought, my dear Letty, and the proof of the way in which your servants have profited by your training. But you need more than this to be a successful hostess. The good hostess brings pleasant smiles and agreeable talk to the table, besides catering for the comfort of her guests. You must not sit silent at the head of your table, like a housekeeper who has only had to order the dinner; you must endeavour to bring out the conversational powers of your guests, and to fill in the gaps with merry talk. You must not be afraid of the sound of your own voice; you should be able to say a few words to people at a little distance as well as to your immediate neighbour, and so acquit yourself that your pleasant face will be missed from the board

when the time arrives for you to give the signal of departure. Bow slightly to the lady at Edward's right hand, rising from your seat as you do so. Edward (or the gentleman nearest the door) opens the door for you, and you ladies leave the room in the same order as you entered it, my little Letty going last.

Adieu, dearest Letty, for the present. Best wishes for success from your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

VII

GARDEN PARTIES

I AM delighted to hear that your first dinner party was such a success, though I am sorry you felt as tired afterwards "as if you had been beaten with sticks." Not even a word for Edward, you say—you were so thoroughly tired out when everyone had gone. Entertaining is curiously fatiguing, the hostess has so much to think of, and I suppose one gives a good deal of one's magnetism away in the effort to make everything go well; but you will get more confidence as you go on, and every successful party you give will help you to feel more confident in the future. Nothing succeeds like success, and when once a hostess gets the reputation for entertaining well, it is easy enough to keep it up. I am glad your dinner-table looked nice, but the moment I had written to you I thought of a prettier idea—which you can use, however, another time. Why didn't I think of advising you to tie up your pink

roses with blue satin ribbons? A Pompadour table is so sweet; sprays of roses on the table, tied with pale blue bows, roses peeping out of the table-napkins, also tied with blue, and pink-shaded candles in the silver candelabra. Mary writes me that light green is the popular colour just now, and that she meets light green table-spreads and parrot-tulips at every function she goes to—whether at lunch, or dinner, or tea.

Anyway, "Edward was pleased!" That seems to be the Alpha and Omega of your vocabulary at present. "Edward likes it"—the most convincing reason in the world; "Edward doesn't like it"—the proof that it is altogether wrong. I almost tremble for you, as I think of you—it seems dreadful for one human being to be so completely wrapt up in another—but I believe that Edward appreciates it, that he is not like the man who replies when one has given him a sovereign: "Thank you ever so much, but what I wanted was a little small change." You will think me very cynical, but very few men appreciate the gold—most of them are more grateful for three-penny bits. I am thankful to think that Edward *really* appreciates you, that he thinks everything

you do is quite perfect, and you the most wonderful woman in the world, and that the knowledge that he so thoroughly believes in you seems to inspire you with the most wonderful confidence, and certainly, the approval of the person we most love is a royal mantle in which we can wrap ourselves, indifferent to what the world may say while we are pleasing to the one we love best. I am thankful that this is my Letty's case, for, shy as she is, what a misery her life might have been had she been married to one of those home tyrants who make the wretchedness of some gentle women's lives. But there! I will get out of my cynical mood, and give you the practical advice you require.

The heat has driven you out of town for a while, and you want to send out invitations for a garden party. You are staying at Edward's charming country house, so near the village in which you were brought up, and you feel more frightened of the local grandees than you do of the smartest women in your London set. Well, I am not sure but what you are right in this. People are so busy in town that they have not much time to criticise; country people are much

more severe if you do not come up to their standard. So now let us think about the garden party, and exercise our "five-thought" to the utmost, in order that everything may go well.

I don't quite understand whether you are going to give a large garden party or a small one—a pleasant little party for a few select friends, or the big annual affair to which almost everyone in the neighbourhood is invited? If it is a small party you can have your refreshments in the house; if a large one, it is necessary to have them out-of-doors. In any case, it is a good deal of trouble, as all the reception-rooms have to be thrown open, even if the guests have only to pass through them on their way to the garden; if the weather is bad they will have to pass all the time in the house, however, so it is essential that everything should be carefully arranged. And the weather is often apt to go wrong at a garden party. "I wonder," said an American woman to me the other day—"I wonder that you English hostesses have the courage to give anything out of doors." It certainly does want courage, considering the samples of weather which in our country take the place of climate, but when it is

a success, what a triumph! A party out-of-doors is most delightful; to wander about the grounds and look at the flowers—what a pleasure for a Londoner; or to sit under the trees and hold pleasant converse with one's friends—it is nicer than any other kind of party if it succeeds!

You should issue your invitations three weeks before the day if you are going to invite the entire county; if it is only a tiny party, a week before the date would be sufficient. Send out "At Home" cards, using your own name only—the host's name is only needed for a dinner party invitation—and be sure to add "and party" after the names of the invited guests. One would not dare to do that in town! How perfectly awful if one's little receptions were attended by friends who brought long strings of strange people one had never set eyes on before—people out of one's set, perhaps, and pronouncing the shibboleth without any suspicion of the necessary Court drawl!—people who required glossaries for the conversation, and did not know what we meant when we spoke of "the" wedding or "the" party of the day before! For London is awfully local

in a sense—it is a very small place when you know it, and every set has its inner circle. But in the country it is different, and the sweet country garden is like Mother Nature—there seems plenty of room for all! You are glad to welcome your friends, and everyone they bring, and the house guests from town are often a welcome addition to the gathering. You can entertain guests of every possible age; the old people enjoy themselves as they sit under the trees, and little children are always welcome at the gathering, as they run about and make it look gay. So you will have a pleasant greeting for all your friends, for “the more the merrier” is the motto of the garden party.

Have plenty of garden chairs (or rout seats) on the lawn, Oriental rugs may be spread out here and there, and the tennis-ground must be in readiness for those who like to play. If you have a large garden party you can have a band, or some glee-singers, or mandolinists to discourse sweet music at intervals, or else a tent devoted to fortune-telling—a delight which seems as if it would never die out. We are all superstitious and egotistical, *more or less*, and we like to hear all about the char-

acters which we know only too well, and about the fortunes which we fancy we might have.

Tea out of doors is always a pleasure, and I would never give a garden party myself unless I had two waterproof tents. One should be for refreshments, the other would serve for shelter during a shower. But, of course, refreshments in the house are easier, and after all they will be very nice in the long dining-room at the Grange, with the French windows opening out on to the lawn. Have a long table placed at one side of the room, and covered with flowers, fruit, cakes, bread-and-butter and sandwiches, the teacups and coffee-cups grouped round the urns, with cream jugs and sugar basins arranged all down the front of the table. Two servants should stand behind this table and pour out the tea and coffee—either men or women servants, it is immaterial which. Large old china or silver bowls of strawberries are placed on the table at intervals; the fruit covered with clotted cream, so that it can be helped all in one. If the fruit is exceptionally fine you can place it on separate tables—a strawberry table, and one for wall fruit; a circular table looks best for this, and you can also have the ices served at a separate

table if you like. A few small tables placed about the room are a great addition to comfort, so that people can sit down to their tea if they like.

If the refreshments are served out of doors try to have one of the tents pretty near the house, so that the servants can easily get fresh supplies of hot water, etc., when required. The ices can be served in a tent farther off, as they are more self-dependent, so to speak. Little tables on the lawn near the tent are very nice—something in the style of the *cafés chantants* which you saw when you were abroad.

You should stand at the top of the lawn, near the house, as long as the guests are arriving. The servant announces them, and you shake hands with them as they enter. If they bring friends with them they should introduce them at once, and you will shake hands with them also. It is quite a tiring business, shaking hands with so many people, and I have noticed that some hostesses never drop their hand more than a few inches after shaking hands with anybody, so as to have it ready for the next comer.

Wear your hat, although you are at home—a pretty rustic hat looks best. Some people carry

a bouquet, but I always think it looks stiff—a wired-up nosegay seems ridiculous in a garden. A sunshade is a necessity, and if you like to tie some roses at the top and at the handle, it will have rather a pretty effect. A white muslin gown will look better than anything, especially as you are a bride—or else one of those pretty *chiné* muslins, which are covered with blurred flowers, all the pretty colours and outlines mingling in one soft haze, like my Letty's present idea of life! My love to my dearest Letty.—Ever her affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

VIII

LORD'S, ASCOT AND GOODWOOD

ALL the booths of Vanity Fair seem to be open to you, and the list of your invitations includes all manner of charming things. Certain invitations are a compliment in themselves. We are always told that an invitation to a dinner party is the highest compliment, but really, I don't know—we ask all manner of old fogies to dinner, my dear Letty, but we should not choose them for the box-seat of a drag when we are going to the races, neither should we particularly pine to have them for visitors at Lord's. Only the brightest and pleasantest components are required for a party of this kind—bright bits of colour to form a pretty pattern in the kaleidoscope. Smart people, pretty people, and pleasant people are what we mostly need—not to mention our “best young man,” without whom everything would seem dull; in fact, such a party resolves itself *into* what we used to have to find in the old

game of forfeits—the prettiest, the wittiest, and the one we love best. So I think you may consider your invitations in the light of a tribute to your attractions, and I hope you will have fine weather and a light heart to add to your enjoyment of all the coming festivities.

I am not altogether sure whether a whole day at Lord's is such an unqualified pleasure. It depends so much upon the hostess, and the party she collects. It is, after all, a picnic in town, which is rather a make-believe thing, and you eat your lunch in more or less discomfort on the top of a drag, and the men of the party work quite as hard as if they were waiters hired out for the day. As for the cricket, one doesn't understand it, and I well remember a Harrow boy who frankly reviled me because he had noticed me sitting on a hamper with my back to the field, and talking to an intimate friend, whilst the most exciting part of the match was going on! He said he should never forget it, my indifference was something quite colossal. And the dust, my dear Letty—the dust is so awful! Do remember to wear brown boots—they look so

much better than black ones by the end of the day.

I always think the Eton and Harrow makes the exception to the rule—the enthusiasm of the young people makes it such a charming sight. The boys dominate the place, and are quite wonderful in their way, and the excitement of the little sisters on the top of the drags is something charming—it simply rejuvenates one to see it. But the real enjoyment of the day, as I was saying, my dear Letty, entirely depends upon your hostess. One feels so penned up in the enclosure, and one can't get out until she has invited one to "go round;" and one feels that most of the fun is outside. She cannot leave her post very long, for fear fresh visitors come. If she is a flirty sort of person, she simply monopolises all the men; they hang round her entreating her to walk round with them, apparently averse to move till she succumbs. If she is a good hostess, she sends her people off as soon as they have lunched, and they go off like the animals into the Ark, two and two.

Then begins the amusement of the day, when

you walk round with a friend, and chat to all the acquaintances you meet; you return to your hostess between your various excursions, and talk to any new people who have dropped in since you left. The afternoon is the visiting-time, and you can either have tea with your hostess or with some friend who is the owner of a neighbouring drag. Tea is a grateful attraction to many of the visitors to Lord's, who have just come in for the afternoon, and a hostess is always very popular who provides a pleasant welcome for all who come. The tea-hour is a very amusing time; it is entertaining to see all the new people coming in.

I see you ask me whether you may walk about with other people besides Edward; you always prefer his company to anybody else's, but you are not sure whether it is not selfish to monopolise him when you are in society. My dear, it is worse than selfish—it is *bourgeois*. Members of the same family do not go into society to stick together all the time; they must mix with the company, and make themselves generally agreeable. Husbands and wives ought to go different ways almost as soon as they enter a room. Even

if you are deprived of Edward's company for a time, you will find it all the more amusing when you are going home, for you will be able to relate your experiences to one another. I don't mean that Edward should neglect you in society—he can't be attentive enough—but he can look after you and keep you in mind without actually remaining by your side all the time, so that all conversation resolves itself into a triangular duel.

I should think you will enjoy Ascot very much; it is a wonderfully brilliant spectacle—quite overwhelming when you see it for the first time. It is such a wonderful kaleidoscope of colour—the lightest tints predominating, and I am sure the ladies in the Royal enclosure look perfectly ethereal, with their dresses like ball-gowns, only high. The course looks just like a flower-bed, with the sunshades like butterflies. Certainly wear your prettiest dress, you can't be too smart for Cup Day.

I see you are going to meet at the Lees, and that Sir Percival drives you down. Well, a drive on a coach is always amusing, but, oh, the *dust* going to Ascot! I would far rather go by

train myself. Whatever you do, Letty, try to keep yourself neat on the way down, and don't arrive dishevelled on the scene of action! Dress your hair very firmly, secure your hat well, and wear a veil. A dust cloak is an absolute necessity, if neatness is to be preserved, but it need not spoil your appearance, as some of the new ones are as delicate as the sheath of a flower. The character of your cloak must depend, to a certain extent, on the toilette which it veils. If you wear a smart tailor-made you can adopt a light dust-coat, somewhat masculine in cut, or a gay checked silk in all the colours of the rainbow (a race-cloak may be a little daring, it is good form), but if you wear a *chiné* muslin, or a shot gauze, or anything like that, you may wear a dust-cloak of the most ornate description — shot silk, or *crépon*, or tussore silk! I really think, in your place, I would wear white. White is always becoming to a bride, and it looks so cool and effective on a race-course, and holds its own, to a certain extent, amongst the elaborate toilettes around. A white muslin dress, and a hat trimmed with daisies — what could be prettier for a country girl like yourself? And be sure

you take a very pretty parasol, something filmy and light, and trimmed with flowers like your hat. The occasion absolutely demands it!

You are very lucky to have been offered the box-seat; be sure you get up and down as deftly as you can. Sir Percival will get down first, and stand by the wheel ready to help you. There will probably be a little ladder for you to get down by, but supposing it was not there I will tell you how to proceed. Alight with your face towards the coach, and if you are doubtful of your footing Sir Percival will place your foot on each step in turn. When you reach the wheel you can put one foot on the top and the next on what Americans call the hub, or else you can turn round when you get to the wheel, and Sir Percival will help you to jump down. This is, perhaps, the better plan, as it will save your dress from coming in contact with the wheel. Luncheon is the first idea when the destination is reached, and the footmen unpack the hampers with all possible expedition. Sometimes the luncheon is taken on the top of the drag, sometimes on a *portable* table. Tables are not supposed to be

allowed at Ascot, but a good many are smuggled in under the guise of hampers. After lunch you will enjoy strolling down the line of coaches and talking to other friends who may be there, or visiting the enclosures of the various clubs, if you happen to come across people who ask you in. The nicest time is between the races, when everyone swarms out upon the green. The great event of the day is the Royal Procession. I always think one is a little disappointed with this when one sees it for the first time—it looks so short, still it is curious in its way. Given a sunny day, a successful toilette, a large circle of friends, I don't know that you can have anything more enjoyable than Cup Day at Ascot.

Except Goodwood! Goodwood has a special charm of its own! Nobody buys new gowns for it, because it's the end of the season, and one won't want to wear them again, so ladies prefer to sport reminiscences of former triumphs, perhaps done up a little for the occasion by some clever milliner. Still the general effect is good—all the colours light and delicate, the men also very smart—it exactly resembles a large garden party. You

know that gentlemen dress differently for different races. They don't mind how they go to the Derby, for example—a sporting get-up is all right—but at Goodwood the high hat and black frock coat or grey Park suit are in the ascendant, though morning-coats and bowlers are occasionally worn. But Goodwood is certainly a “high-hat race,” and although men generally drive down in bowlers on account of the dust, they change their hats when they get within measurable distance of the lawn. You will be amused to see the immense array of hat-boxes which come down inside the coaches! Arrived at the lawn, the gentlemen help the ladies to dismount, and the dust-cloaks are thrown off and left in charge of the servants. You will be charmed to find yourself on the lawn, with that beautiful landscape in the background, a crowd of well-dressed people all round you, and all the rougher elements of the race-course out of sight. It is quite a pretty sight to see the luncheon tables laid out. They are arranged on the top terrace of the lawn, and the flowers and decorations are quite a sight. Sometimes the cloth is laid upon the ground, sometimes on a portable table (many of *them* are no more than two feet high), and

the shell-fish, salads, strawberries, and fruit *sorbets* give quite a roseate aspect to the meal. Folding chairs are placed round the tables for the convenience of the guests, and the footmen wait. The Royalties stroll about the lawn, just as they would at a garden party given by a friend, and it is amusing to note the meetings and greetings. Supposing that one of the Royalties stops to speak to some lady who is in the middle of her lunch, it is not etiquette for her to stop to put down her plate; she rises with it in her left hand, extending the right one for the proffered handshake, giving the regulation Court curtsy as she does so. (I suppose you know that the modern Court curtsy chiefly resembles a charity bob? Straight down and up again, quickly, just as if you were dipping in the sea, the head held erect all the time. But if you watch the ladies at Goodwood you will see in a minute how it is done.)

After lunch the party breaks up, and the people stroll off in various directions. Get Edward to take you round to see the bookmakers, it's awfully amusing, and, of course, you will go and see the prizes, if you want to see the British silversmith at his worst. Be back in

time to get a good place to see the races from—the horses really look lovely flying along on the green turf. Most modern women know a good deal about racing, and not a few make books, and clear a good bit of money by the end of the year. But I imagine my dear Letty is not of this type—I expect her interest in the races will be as purely æsthetic as was that of her affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

IX

UP THE RIVER

IF you have never been up the river before, my dear Letty, except just for the day, I really envy you your sensations when I hear that you have got a houseboat at Henley for the whole of July. The river is such an unspeakable joy to the people who appreciate it. The world is divided into two classes—the people who like the river and the people who do not. Those who like it will always consider the other half of creation as blind and ignorant, those who do not like it will look on the others as harmless lunatics. I am sure you will be classed with the lovers of the river—the Cleopatra of Nature—the lovely thing which is different every day, and most beautiful in its latest mood. Life up the river is a true joy; scarcely like life—like something better; a constant succession of beautiful sensations, for the river is as changeable as the sea, only without the sea's unrest.

I am afraid all these lovely sights are slightly discounted for the housekeeper at Henley! Alas! my dear, that housekeeping! It robs half the poetry from life, and when you ought to be admiring the yellow sunset on the water you will be wondering whether you ordered enough fowls, and whether the lobster salad will go round. River-life is all so new to you that you are afraid you will be making all kinds of mistakes, and you are so frightened lest Edward should think the party has been a failure, and that he has been happier at Henley in his bachelor days. Well, entertaining at Henley is rather an onerous business, and I daresay your happiest time will be when all the fuss of the regatta is over, and you and Edward settle down into a second edition of Paradise and enjoy the lovely life of the river in a pleasing *solitude à deux*. Still, I hope you will enjoy your party to a certain extent, and I can just imagine how busy you will be the day before, decorating the boat and making it look its best.

I quite agree with you as to the decorative value of white and yellow, and think you could not have chosen a better combination. White marguerites

and yellow calceolarias will look lovely all along the front of the boat, and wicker-work chairs, enamelled white and supplied with yellow silk cushions, will help to carry out the idea. Then your tea-set should be yellow, and you can get the prettiest afternoon tea-cloths in white linen, embroidered with yellow flowers. It takes an immense amount of things to decorate a house-boat, and sometimes you are driven to tie your silk sashes round the flower pots, and to use up your lace fichus for draping the mirrors.

The food is a serious consideration, as you can never tell how many people you may have to entertain. It is no joke to invite a party of twenty or thirty people to spend the day with you, and to give them lunch, tea and supper, and various drinks during the day, but when you add to this all sorts of unexpected friends who have come down to see the races, and look in for lunch or tea, I assure you it takes a good housekeeper to be prepared for all emergencies! Lay in a good stock of fowls, lobsters, and salads of all kinds. "Cups" will be greatly appreciated, and most people like ices at some stage of the proceedings. You will have plenty to do on the day before the regatta, and

when the house-boat is decorated, dispose the rest of the flowers on your boat, your punt, and your canoe. It is rather amusing, when you are so busy, to give a glance up "House-boat Street," and to see all the other hostesses similarly employed, and the boats becoming yellower or greener, as the case may be, under the influence of some dominant idea. The *Rouge-et-Noir* is ablaze with red geraniums, the *Golden Butterfly* is getting yellower every minute, the *Grasshopper* is growing gradually more green. All the hostesses are hot and flurried, and in their very plainest gowns, whilst the men are assisting, or sent on errands to the town, according to their intrinsic value in time of need.

Space is terribly limited on a house-boat, and you should not take down any more dresses than you will actually require. Still, you will want a different dress for each day of the regatta—the smartest one for Cup Day, of course. You cannot dress too simply, as a general rule, when you are staying up the river, for anything elaborate looks dreadful in a boat; but the hostess of a house-boat may be allowed to be smart, for she will remain at her post nearly all the time, and is not *likely* to be going about the course. Let your

colours correspond with the decorations of your boat. I should suggest that you wear a white serge dress with a yellow tie and hat-band on one of the days, a white muslin gown with a yellow sash on another day, and on the grand day of all you might venture on a yellow soft silk, with a white muslin hat trimmed with yellow marguerites. A yellow Japanese sunshade is the proper thing for you to carry ; nothing looks so well, particularly in a small boat—it always makes a boat look so smart. You ought to buy a number of these sunshades before you go down, as they are not very durable, and you will like them for yourself, and also to lend to friends who are staying with you. It is right to be smart at regatta times, but on ordinary occasions the simpler your dress the better. A navy serge coat and skirt and yellow silk blouse for chilly days, and a good supply of white cotton blouses to wear with holland skirts for warm ones—this and a plain sailor hat will be your ordinary attire on the river. A dressy hat looks very bad (except at the regatta), and could anything look more shocking than a bonnet in a boat? Even the oldest lady must not venture on such a thing ; she must wear some simple black

straw hat of unassuming shape, softened down with pleatings of black chiffon or net.

You will ask down a different party for every day of the regatta, and a few favourite friends to stay for the whole of the time. You can put up two or three in the boat, and can engage rooms at one of the hotels for some more. It not unfrequently happens that one of the men loses his last train, and has to be put up anyhow at the last moment—a shake-down in the sitting-room has been heard of before now, for a house-boat at Henley has to be remarkably elastic—and you must go on being pleasant and good-tempered, however you may suffer from overcrowding.

You should remain on the house-boat nearly all day to receive the guests, but Edward should go down to the station to meet the earlier trains, and bring along the guests in detachments. This is a very welcome attention to the guests, for it is not always easy to “spot” your friend’s house-boat in the crowd, and it is hateful to wander up the bank in doubt. Some of the men who come down won’t mind walking up the towing-path till they get opposite the house-boat, when someone can go over and fetch them,

but Edward will row the ladies up, and you will come to the top of the steps to welcome them. You generally offer the visitors iced claret-cup on their arrival, and then arrange for them to be rowed up the course in detachments. The older people will be most amused by simply sitting down and watching the scene, but young people like to be in the midst of all the fun, and it is so delightful to go all along the course and notice the different decorations of the house-boats, and to exchange greetings with the friends who pass you in the other boats. Lunch is always welcome when one is on the river, and some people have it laid in the dining-room (supposing it is large enough) and have a sit-down meal, but you will be wiser to have a buffet on deck, and let the gentlemen wait on the ladies. Your servants can stand behind the buffet, and help the various dishes. I should give them all white linen dresses and white caps and aprons—it looks so nice on the river. After lunch, more races to be watched, and more friends start off on little trips up the course. All kinds of people will flock in during the afternoon, and you must have a welcome for one and all. Tea has to

be remembered in good time, as people are always glad of it, particularly if it is a hot sunny day; and then there must be a meal of some kind for people who go up by late trains, even if it is only a *réchauffé* of the lunch. Edward should go to the station and see the last detachment of guests off, but he can't be spared before that. After all the guests have gone, you and Edward and the people who are staying in the house-boat can go up and down the course in the cool of the evening. I think you will find this the happiest time in the day. On the last night of all you will all desert the house-boat, and go up and down the course to see the illuminations and fireworks. The river is always so crowded then that sculling is almost out of the question, though a punt-pole can be used, as it takes less room. You just help yourself along by the other boats as you go, and the river is as crowded as Fleet Street on a busy morning. You must keep your temper under all possible collisions, and even if the poor yellow silk cushions get spoilt, you must look rather pleased than otherwise. You will greatly enjoy the sight of the decorated boats, and I am sure your own ought to be as pretty as

any when it is lighted up with plenty of yellow Japanese lanterns.

Be sure to be careful how you get in and out of a boat. A skiff is the worst, because you have to take such a long step. Nothing upsets a punt—you can put your foot quite near the side without fear of accidents, but you must put your foot right in the middle of a skiff, or you will overbalance it. If you simply put your foot down without drawing the boat in with it first you send the boat from you, and you may have an awkward accident. Put your right foot into the boat, and draw the boat as near the bank as you can by this means before you step in. In getting out of a boat the contrary holds good. You plant one foot firmly on the bank (or the step of the house-boat, as the case may be) and draw the boat after you with the foot which is at the back. Perhaps you would like a few rules about the etiquette of the river, in case Edward ever goes up to town and you want to go about by yourself, or with the ladies who are staying with you. Do not be nervous about going through the locks, but exercise proper care. Always let a steamer enter the lock first, and let her go

out first, too. You may pull yourself out of the lock by a steamer if you like. A skiff may help itself by a punt, and a canoe may help itself by anything, on account of its weakness. But a punt must not try to get help from other things, because it is so safe and broad and steady itself. When you are in a boat and going against the stream you should take the shore, but when you are going with the stream you should keep in the middle of the river. If you have someone to steer, you must always give way to a boat which has no coxswain, a row-boat gives way to a sailing-boat, and so on. You see the laws of the river are all most excellent, being founded on proper principles, such as the protection of the weak, by the way. If you are going to learn to punt, I should strongly advise you to practise early in the morning, as you won't be in anybody's way, or exposed to ridicule. One looks awfully silly when one is learning to punt. Sometimes the punt goes right round, yet you can't get it on; but when once you have mastered the alphabet you will find this accomplishment a most abundant source of pleasure. Don't take anybody with you when

you are learning—it is too unpleasant for them. When once you can manage your punt you will have endless pleasant excursions up the river particularly when the regatta is over, and the dear river has gone back into its normal condition. Personally, I like Henley better at any other time than during the regatta week—still, one would not miss the regatta all the same!

Good-bye for the present, dear Letty. Believe me, as ever, your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

X

ON BEING PRESENTED AT COURT

"MRS EDWARD IRONSIDE, presented on her marriage by Lady Highflyte." That does not sound an intensely thrilling announcement, but a great variety of emotions are enclosed in those simple words—all the trouble of preparation, the long wait in the Mall, the heart-beats, the nervousness and anxiety, and, finally, the awful introduction to Royalty itself, when such a mist swims before your eyes that you scarcely know where you are. Presentation is certainly rather an awful ordeal. The dress is a difficulty in itself, and it takes experience to wear it with grace. That lengthy train, those nodding plumes, and the tulle veil streaming behind—it is all (as my old Scotch servant said) *gey ill to deal wi'*, till it has been worn a good many times. I always think the ladies of the Diplomatic Corps wear their dresses *better than anybody*. They go to the Drawing-

room so often that they get quite at home in the regulation costume, and wear their splendours with ease. On the other hand, it takes youth and beauty to come triumphantly out of such an ordeal as evening dress in the daytime, so you must take courage, and hope to look quite your best.

A Drawing-room gown is divided into two parts—the train and the petticoat. The latter is in reality an entire dress, which makes a beautiful dinner-gown later on. The dress must have a low bodice and short sleeves (unless you have permission from the Lord Chamberlain to the contrary, owing to delicate health or advanced age). The train must be not less than three yards and a-half long, but it may be cut round or square, fastened from one shoulder (or both), or put on at the waist, according to the fancy of the wearer. It is compulsory for both married and unmarried ladies to wear plumes—a *débutante* wears two white feathers, but you as a married lady must wear three. *White* feathers are imperative, as are also white gloves, the only exception being if you are in mourning, when black feathers and grey or black gloves will look more in keeping

with your dress. Your white satin wedding dress will make a lovely petticoat. I am glad it is trimmed with pearls and old lace, and is altogether so nice. I suppose your train will be of white brocade lined with white satin, and your bouquet of white orchids—it is usual for brides to wear white when they are presented. If you prefer a little colour, it is not against the rules. You might have a suspicion of pink in your brocade, and line the train with pink satin to correspond; in this case you would carry a bouquet of half-blown roses tied with pink ribbons. A *débutante* must wear white, but when you are presented on your marriage you can exercise your own judgment in the matter.

And now about the *modus operandi*. Lady Highflyte must attend the Drawing-room, as she is going to present you, but she need not accompany you, and it is quite immaterial which of you enters the Throne-room first. There is no precedence at the Drawing-room, except for the members of the Diplomatic Corps; there all the other ladies go in according to the order in which they arrive, as the great object is not to keep *Royalty* waiting. Lady Highflyte will write a note

to the Lord Chamberlain informing him of her intention to be present, and mentioning that she is going to present you. You must then apply at the Lord Chamberlain's office for two cards, and fill them in with your name and address; also write Edward's name, your father's and Lady Highflyte's (the latter signing one of the cards). You must leave these cards at the Lord Chamberlain's office (in Stable-yard, St James's), within three or four days of the Drawing-room, so that your name may be submitted to the Queen. Two other cards must be obtained from the Lord Chamberlain's office the day before the Drawing-room, and these should be filled in with your name and Lady Highflyte's. Take these two cards to the Palace on the day of the Drawing-room; give the first to the page in the ante-room, and the second to the usher at the entrance of the Throne-room; he hands it to the Lord Chamberlain, who announces the name to her Majesty.


When you arrive at the Palace, you can either leave your wraps in the carriage or in the cloak-room, as you prefer. You will cross the Great Hall, and make your way up the Grand Staircase to the corridor, where you get rid of your

first card. You then pass on to the first saloon. A first sight of the Palace is very imposing. The rooms are very handsome, the stairs decidedly fine, and the beautiful dresses and uniforms give unspeakable brilliance to the scene. If the Drawing-room is very crowded, you really don't see many of the people as you go along. You proceed from room to room, seeing always the same few ladies who happen to be next you. The Palace is perfectly warm, though the rooms are so large, and if it is a dull day they light up the chandeliers.

I will now tell you exactly how the Throne-room is arranged, so that you will know where to go when you enter it. The Queen is seated a little to the left (not exactly facing you as you enter, as every *débutante* seems to imagine!); she is surrounded by a brilliant galaxy, consisting of various members of the Royal family and their attendants. Her Majesty used formerly to stand throughout the ceremony, but now she is always seated in a large chair. Everyone else in the room is standing, of course. The Queen holds her hand very low, she does not adopt the modern fashion of the "high handshake," and the tall *débutantes* feel, when they are making their curtsy, as if they would never

get down to her Majesty's hand. The ladies of the diplomatic circle stand at the left of the Queen (facing you as you enter), the gentlemen of the Diplomatic Corps stand in front of them, forming a line across the centre of the room. When you enter the Throne-room you let down your train (which you have carried until now over your left arm), the ushers spread it out for you with their wands, and you advance with all your plumes outspread. You have taken off your right hand glove before you entered the Throne-room, so as to have your hand all ready to place beneath the Queen's. Your name sounds dreadfully loud when it is announced, and you seem to hear it a long time before you make your appearance! You now make your lowest curtsey to the Queen, and kiss her hand, first placing your right-hand beneath that of her Majesty's. The ceremony over, you retire, stepping backwards, so as to face the Queen, and curtseying as you go to any member of the Royal family whom you have the presence of mind to recognise. Don't go and bow to all the equerries, as poor Mrs Van Dollar used to do! Above all, remember only to walk backwards until you reach the diplomatic line. You are

then supposed to have left the Royal presence, and it would be very ridiculous to walk backwards when all you could see would be the backs of the ambassadors and *attachés*. Many ladies do this when they pay their first visit to the Palace, and it is the cause of much suppressed mirth amongst the ushers and *attachés*. You are allowed a very brief moment in which to gaze upon the Queen. Her Majesty soon gets tired of the Drawing-room, which must indeed be a very fatiguing business to her, and she has been known to murmur: "Next lady! next lady!" to the Lord Chamberlain when a *débutante* had stood too much upon the order of her going. The ordeal over, the ushers pick up your train and put it over your arm. You then leave the Royal presence and breathe afresh. You will not wait long in the next room, because it belongs to the Diplomatic Corps, but in the room beyond you can recover yourself a little, and chat over the events of the day with your friends. You will now hurry home, if you are going to have a Drawing-room tea, or else, perhaps, you will go to be photographed, or drop in at two of three houses (to other people's "teas") on your way home. If you give a "tea," don't go and be

photographed on your way home; it isn't fair to the guests who are waiting for your return. Time is so precious on Drawing-room days, and your friends have probably many other invitations of a similar kind, so that they naturally want to get away as quickly as they can. Don't have singing and entertainments, and try to turn the affair into a party—let people come and go as they like. And don't make much fuss about the invitation, Letty—just write a few notes, or ask people verbally; it's not good style to make much fuss about a Drawing Room tea. It is very probable that the guests will arrive before you can get away from the Palace, but they will not mind a slight delay from such a legitimate cause. Get someone to act hostess till you return—Edward's sister, Leila Meredith, would do nicely, as she seems to have so much *savoir faire*. Have the tea arranged in the dining-room—on no account in the drawing-room, for fear anything might be upset over your train. Have a nicely-decorated buffet, with the servants standing behind it to pour out the tea and coffee; wine on the sideboard if you like—also cups of various kinds, a variety of fancy sandwiches, ices, and cakes of every description. 

Highflyte will come home with you to keep you in countenance, and you might ask other friends who were at the Drawing-room to look in during the course of the afternoon. It is not a very comfortable thing to be the only person in the room in evening dress, but this often falls to the share of the hostess at a Drawing-room tea. Keep your train over your arm most of the time ; let it down when anyone wants to see it, and ask the other ladies who have been at the Drawing-room to do the same. Don't forget to have a white crumb-cloth laid down in the drawing-room, for fear of hurting the trains.

Good-bye, dearest Letty, for the present ! Mind you have a nice photograph of yourself taken in your Drawing-room dress for the benefit of your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

P.S.—What about Leila Meredith and young Maddox ? I fancy that is going to be a “case.”

XI

A WIDOW'S WEDDING

I AM so glad that your Drawing-room dress was such a success, that you got through the ordeal so well on the whole, and that your "tail tea" went off so nicely. I can imagine how you looked from the description you have given me, not to mention the important picture of you in one of the ladies' papers, in which your train appears to be streaming over the entire page. Did you sit for that picture? I don't think my dear Letty can ever have held her head up like a restive charger with a bearing-rein, neither do I think she can have got such a long neck since she came to town, not to speak of two extra ribs. However, I must accept the picture *faute de mieux*, but do not forget to send me a nice photograph directly you get it.

I am glad you have cut up your wedding dress, and am sure it must have made a beautiful

petticoat for your Court gown. It will make a nice evening dress now, as white is always so much worn in the season, and it will not look like a wedding dress now that the bodice is cut low. When I was young, brides used to go out to their first parties in their wedding dresses, and horrid they used to look. The long Court train, the mass of dead white, used to look most unsuitable to an ordinary evening party; in fact, a wedding dress looks in place on the one occasion for which it is intended, but it should never be worn again until it has been entirely remodelled. And the orange-blossoms should be promptly picked off, and the train cut short, and everything done to relieve it of the stiff and imposing appearance which is unsuitable for ordinary life. Wear white as much as you like for the first year, it always looks nice for a young bride, but do not allow it to have that frightfully aggressive appearance which looks as though a person were anxious to advertise her marriage to the world.

And now about Leila Meredith's wedding. I was not so surprised as you thought I should be—you know I asked you whether it was not

going to be an engagement the last time I wrote—but, of course, I had no idea it was going to be so soon. I suppose the fact of Harry Maddox's regiment being ordered abroad has precipitated matters a good deal. I always thought it looked suspicious when you told me that she was so constantly saying that she would never get married again—it showed she was beginning to think about it. I should think they ought to be a very happy couple. Her first marriage was such a mistake, was it not?—all that dreadful disparity of years, and Mr Meredith such a terrible martinet—that horrid will, too, which deprives her of most of her money if she marries again. Well, she has married for money and not got it; she is marrying for love this time—let us hope it will be a more fortunate investment.

I can understand how excited you must be about the whole affair, considering that you have watched it from the very commencement, and that the wedding is to take place at your flat. You will really be the most important person after the bride, and I should think you will quite enjoy this wedding—indeed, everyone

enjoys a wedding more than the principal parties concerned.

You ask me to tell you all the particulars I can with reference to a widow's wedding, and in what way it will differ from your own. Lady Highflyte's ideas appear to be altogether too lachrymose, and her jubations seem to produce the most dreadful effect upon Leila Meredith's temper. You made me laugh when you described the way in which Lady Highflyte kept on saying, "It must all be very quiet, my dear!" and how, finally, Leila lost her temper, and exclaimed: "Perhaps you would like me to wear my widow's veil!"

It seems that she suddenly calmed down after this exhibition of temper, and came and whispered: "Look, here, Letty, Lady Highflyte makes me cross, but you might write and ask your Aunt Priscilla what she thinks—she's a kind old thing, and I don't mind *her*!" Well, after this flattering compliment, my dear, I can do nothing less than unfold all the little knowledge I have upon the subject. I think it is too bad of Lady Highflyte to object to Leila's getting married again—her first marriage was not a happy one—indeed, she was simply sacrificed to her

mother's ambition; but she made the best of things during Mr Meredith's lifetime, and she has not married with indecent haste. It is three years now since she was a widow, and you know she could have married a year ago if she had chosen, without anybody thinking it improper.

And now, what are all these things you want to know? Let me look at your letter again, and see what are the questions you have asked me. "May a widow wear a white dress? May she wear orange-blossoms? Can she wear a veil? Can she have bridesmaids?—she will feel very dull without!" There are a number of questions to answer in a breath! Well, a widow's wedding need not be quite such a lachrymose affair as it used to be, but still, my dear Letty, I am inclined to agree with Lady Highflyte that it is in better taste to have it rather quiet. As for her dress, I really don't see why a widow should adopt a kind of half-mourning when she has passed that stage long since and has been wearing pretty colours for a year. Most widows are married in lavender or grey, and I believe it was Gladys, Lady Lonsdale, who first struck a more cheerful note by appearing in pink silk and white lace

when she became Lady de Grey. I should not advise Leila Meredith to wear pink, but I should think she would look lovely in tussore silk with Allan Richardson roses in her bonnet. She can wear cream colour, lavender, mauve, or grey—anything, in fact, but the pure white which is reserved for the girlish bride. She must not wear orange-blossoms, neither must she wear a wreath or a large bridal veil—she can wear a veil over her bonnet (short or long, as she prefers), but not a long bridal veil such as you wore yourself. Certainly she can carry a bouquet, and the bridegroom must give it to her—it should not be of white flowers, one of yellow roses would look best. A bouquet is always a comfort to a bride—it gives her something to do with her hands, and really, Letty, it is no light ordeal to walk up the aisle with every eye fixed on you, and without the train of bridesmaids to divide the attentions of the multitude. A widow must not have bridesmaids, as I suppose you are aware, but she can have a *demoiselle d'honneur*. What are her functions, you will say? And how does she differ from a bridesmaid? Well, the most important difference is that she does not follow

the bride up the aisle; she arrives at the church in good time, and sits down in one of the pews at the top, on the left-hand side, taking care to choose the outside seat, so that when the bride arrives she has nothing to do but to step quietly out into the aisle, standing at her left hand, a little to the rear, so that she is ready to hold the gloves and bouquet. She should wear a smart little dress, and pretty hat, a little plainer in style than the dress worn by the bride—a chiné silk, or a pretty crépon, and a white lace hat trimmed with roses. She can carry a bouquet if she likes, and the bridegroom gives her a pretty brooch or bangle in honour of the occasion. It is not correct to have favours at a widow's wedding—all these pretty, frivolous customs belong to girl-brides.

She can have a wedding-cake, and, of course she will have wedding-presents—everyone who comes to the wedding will naturally send a gift. I don't suppose she will want to have a great many guests—just a few intimate friends and relations to come in and drink her health and wish her good luck. They say no one is so graceful as a widow-bride, and I feel sure that

Leila Meredith will be no exception to the rule. No, I don't think she need invite her first husband's relations. It would only make it awkward for all parties, and they will not be offended, as it is going to be such a quiet wedding. Edward will walk up the church with his sister; you will wear your prettiest dress, and carry a bouquet, and take pains to make everything go well. I am so glad to think you are gaining more confidence; but, indeed, it must be a great help to you to have a husband who worships the ground you tread upon, and who thinks you do everything well. To be thoroughly pleasing to the person she loves best—what greater happiness can a woman have in life? Crowns are nothing beside it, and the applause of the multitude but an idle sound. I am glad you are so happy, my dear.—Your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

P.S.—I re-open this letter to answer your question about Leila's wedding-ring. She will not want to wear two wedding-rings—it would look very clumsy and unusual. She should take off her first ring before she goes to church on

the morning of the wedding. Some women like to retain the old ring (but I should think very few), and in this case they wear the second ring first, placing the first ring above as a keeper.

XII

A CHRISTENING PARTY

I LAUGHED and cried together this morning when I got the pencilled note in which you gave me the description of your baby. If that account is to be considered as veracious, and strictly impartial, he is simply the most perfect creature who has ever visited this mortal sphere since the time of the Greek gods. The most perfect little features (even now), the bluest eyes, like old china plates, a complexion as soft as rose-leaves, and the dearest little hands! The feet with which he will condescend to tread the earth when the right time arrives are rosy as a seashell—only fit for kissing now; and surely no baby ever had such dear dimpled shoulders, or such a lovely straight back! And better than all is the lovely smile which he keeps for no one but you. When the nurse kept telling people that he “took no notice” as yet, he

would always turn a sweet contented glance upon you—a look full of expression, as who would say: “What talks you and I will have one of these days!” He is all that your fancy painted him, and more; no such lovely creature has ever been seen on the face of this globe since it first began to roll. Indeed, my dear Letty, I am not laughing at you, I am sure every word is true. There is only one baby in the world like this—I suppose I must not tell you he is every mother’s first child!

I can fancy how many plans you are revolving in your mind as you lie apparently idle on your couch. The nursery rhymes you remember, the many little tales you will tell him one day, when you shall be his unwearied Scheherazade; the toys you will give him, the pleasures and treats; the joy of walking with your little son, and feeling his tiny hand in yours. Everyone will love him—it will be impossible to avoid it—but you will always be his most willing slave! Long after everyone else makes him walk up the stairs he will hold up his arms to you, directly he sees you, and say: “Carry!” He shall never hear a harsh word, he shall have

such a happy childhood to look back on, everything that you vainly longed for in your motherless childhood shall be his. Yet all this indulgence will not spoil him; he will be a model child, kindness will be as good for him as the sunshine is for flowers. I congratulate you, my dear, on your happy dreams, and only wish I could tell you so in person, and also see this wonderful creature who is such a revelation of beauty and sweetness.

He *did* lose his temper when Lady Highflyte came, but I daresay she looked a little alarming with all those tall plumes and the *pince-nez*. Children show extraordinary sagacity in the likes and dislikes they exhibit—poor little Mrs Three-Vol was telling me the other day that whenever a publisher came into the room her baby simply shrieked the house down. It is to be hoped that your baby will behave better at his christening—although people *do* say that a child who does not cry on this occasion is too good to live; still, it cannot be said that this conduct is conducive to comfort in the present, however much it may relieve you from *anxiety* regarding his future.

So he is not to be Edward the Second after all? There can only be one Edward for you, you say, and it would only end in his being called some horrible nickname to distinguish him from his father. He is to be called Harry, after his godfather, and do I think it is pretty? Yes, I like it very much, and a plain name is perhaps better for a boy—he has to go to school with it, you know, and boys get awfully teased if their names are of too fanciful a character. I am glad Leila and Harry are to be godparents, and I think you have been right in asking Sir John Percival to be the other godfather, for he and his wife are such old friends of yours, and have always been so kind and nice to you. I had another nice letter from Edward yesterday, and he says: "Letty says, will you tell her all about the Christening, and give her any general hints you can." Well, let me see what I can think of to tell you. It is more difficult this time, as I have no questions from you, and so I don't know what you know and what you don't!

I am glad you have had so many kind friends inquiring for you, and that your sick-room was like a bower of flowers. It is sweet of you to

say that you liked my flowers best—the roses came from the old rose-garden which you used to play in when you were a child. When you feel quite convalescent and able to see people you should send out cards to return thanks to all these kind friends. Your visiting-card will do, “With thanks for kind inquiries” written at the top. Don’t see too many people at first—it is so fatiguing, and no one will be offended if they hear you do not feel quite equal to seeing them yet. I am so glad your servants have behaved so nicely, and that Edward tells you that everything is going on like clock-work, as far as household arrangements are concerned, and that his dinners are all right, only that he hates the dining-room without you, and the drawing-room even more. I am so thankful that the servants seem to be doing their best. When you go down you may see many little things that you don’t like, however, but you must not worry over them even if it is so; take things very quietly at first, or you will never be well. I am sure you felt glad that your abode was all in such beautiful order, and that you knew *exactly* where everything was, and that you

could always tell people where to find whatever was wanted at the moment. Order is the soul of housekeeping, and it is in sudden emergencies that its full benefits are realised.

You can have the christening in the morning or the afternoon, as you prefer. In the first case you invite the guests back to lunch, in the latter case to tea. It is the nurse's place to carry the child into church, and she gives it to the chief sponsor at the proper time, when she has to place it in the clergyman's arms. The poor mite is then given back to the sponsor, who returns it to the nurse—and glad it is to get back to her after all these unaccustomed vicissitudes. It will be Leila Marchmont's place to hold the child at the font, as she is one of the family, and this would be so even if Lady Highflyte and Lady Percival were sponsors, relationship counting before rank in such an important affair. If neither of the sponsors were relations, the lady of highest rank would present the child. I am not quite sure about the fees, but if you apply to the verger beforehand, he will tell you what is correct. If you want to be very smart, have copies of the christening-service

bound in white vellum, and presented to the guests.

There is a good deal of "tipping" at christenings—as, indeed, on most of the occasions of social life. You and Edward must give the nurse a souvenir in the shape of two or three pounds; the sponsors give a present of money—generally gold. Visitors who call to see the baby during the early days usually bestow a gratuity on the nurse—though I never can see myself why one should give the nurse half-a-guinea because another woman has had a child. You will be dressed simply and quietly at the christening, but the baby must be in all his finest clothes—and he seems to have a great many, considering how little space he has for their display. Baby will appear in his loveliest robe, a mass of fine muslin and old lace, and this will be covered by his white satin cloak, trimmed with more lace, his hood tied with white satin ribbons. His mantle and hood must be removed when he is taken to the font.

Do remind Leila to place him on the clergyman's left arm, and not on the right. Edward and you will probably go to church in the same carriage with nurse and baby, and return in the same way.

Whether you have a tea or a lunch, a christening cake must be a feature in the proceedings; a large cake covered with white ice (no colour should be used) with a sugar cradle or a sugar ship for "good luck" in the centre. It is your business to cut the cake (just as it was at your wedding)—at anyrate you must make the first incision with the knife. If you give a tea the cake is put in the centre of the tea-table; if a lunch, it is placed on the table at dessert.

If you give a lunch, you should have champagne, in order that baby's health may be proposed. I expect that you would find a tea less trouble, and you can give a simple or a formal one, according to choice. You can have a pretty buffet in the dining-room, with servants standing behind it to pour out the tea, or simply have the tea served in the drawing-room in the ordinary way—perhaps Leila would pour it out for you to save you trouble, and the gentlemen would wait on the ladies. Sponsors are expected to give a christening present, and these should be prettily arranged on a table in the drawing-room, with the names of the givers affixed to them. Plenty of flowers should be used in the decorations, and a pretty

idea is to use only bell-shaped flowers in honour of the occasion. Canterbury bells, convolvuli, and lilies of the valley can be used, and a table centre with all these sweet flowers growing out of a mossy bank would be very pretty.

You ask me to write to you often, but I am sure you are now so proud that you need no advice from me! The wife of the most adoring husband, the mother of the most beautiful creature in Christendom—you are happy and proud now, and need nothing to add to your content. One thing I know you will always have—the love and good wishes of your affectionate Aunt

PRISCILLA.

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